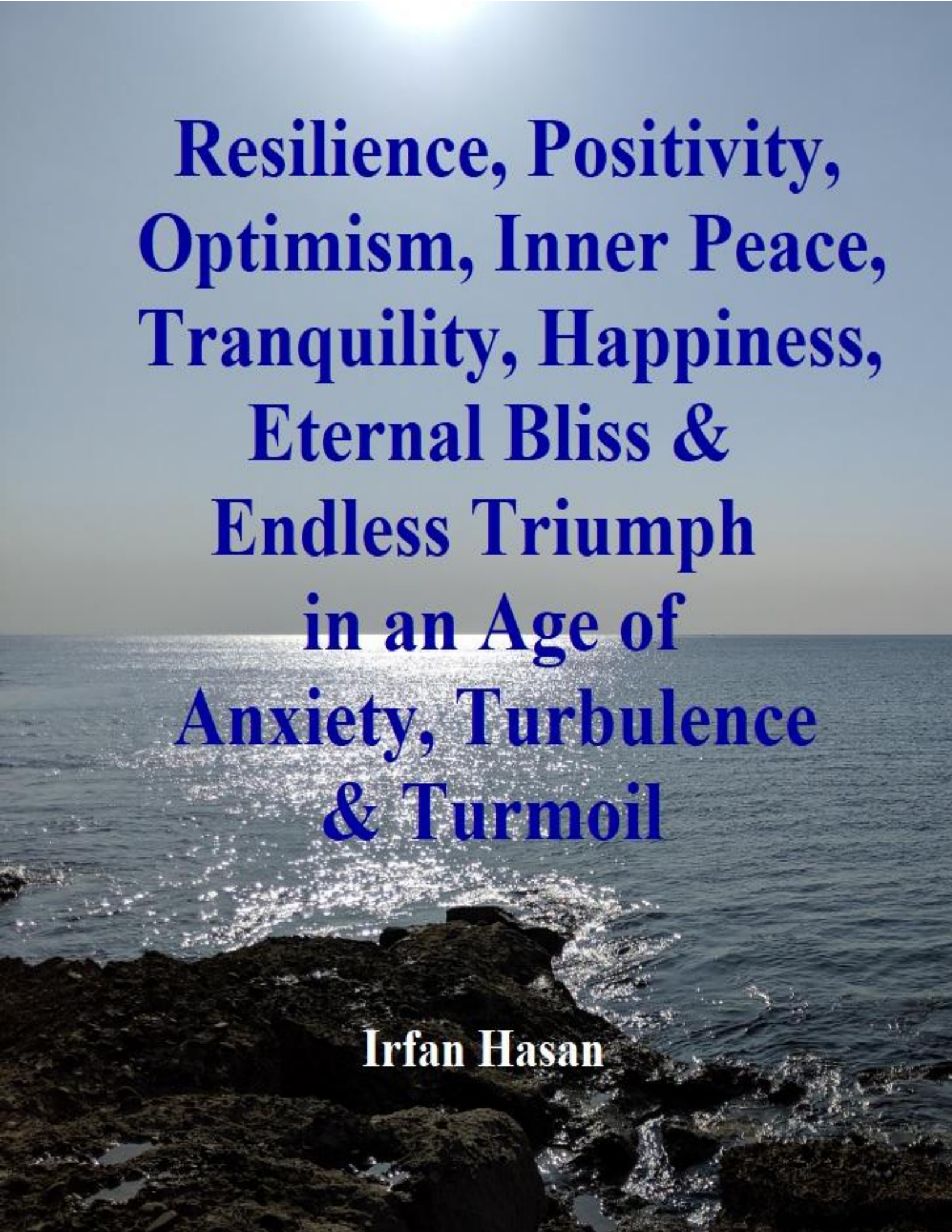
Resilience, Positivity, Optimism, Inner Peace, Tranquility, Happiness, Eternal Bliss & Endless Triumph in an Age of Anxiety, Turbulence & Turmoil
Irfan Hasan

Resilience, Positivity, Optimism, Inner Peace, Tranquility, Happiness, Eternal Bliss & Endless Triumph in an Age of Anxiety, Turbulence & Turmoil

Compiled, translated and explained from the timeless works of one of the greatest thinkers and revivers of the entire human civilization – Imam Abu Hamid Muhammad Al-Ghazali (1058-1111 A.D.)

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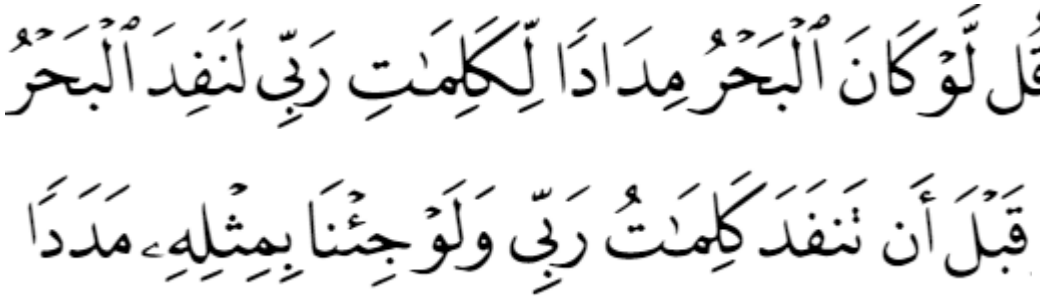
This work is a compilation, condensation, translation and explanation by the author from the timeless works of Imam Abu Hamid Muhammad Al-Ghazali (1058-1111 A.D.) and to some extent, from the works of Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi (1207-1273 A.D.). Complete source references have been provided in the bibliography. Author has added all explanations provided within square brackets and parentheses to clarify important points and terminologies. All Arabic words and terminologies have been transliterated into English, italicized, and translated.



"Say, 'If the ocean were to become ink for [writing] the words of my Lord, the ocean would be exhausted before the words of my Lord are exhausted, even if We brought the like of it as a supplement.'"

(Qur'an on the immensity of the fathomless ocean of esoteric spiritual knowledge and experience. Chapter 18, Verse 109)

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ABSTRACT

Humanity finds itself today, searching for inner and outer peace with their various positive ramifications and manifestations in our everyday lives, while steeped into anxiety and turmoil, facing immense challenges and turbulence around. Patience, guidance, truth, and wisdom are needed to navigate through the treacherous waters of present-day crises and challenges. However, multitudes of challenges at every level faced by an ordinary individual, are so draining and consuming that no intellectual, psychological, and spiritual resources are left to find a way out. Guidance to see the light at the end of tunnel and to positively turn things around, is either not available to many or obfuscated by mass confusion, hysteria, negativity, and disinformation this "information age" has paradoxically brought. Information age was supposed to dawn an era of enlightenment and not its opposite that is prevalent today.

When we look at the state of affairs and the matters as they stand now, we find ourselves either living in an age of anxiety, even with prevalent material prosperity fostered by economic and technological development, or living in an age of turmoil if beset with social disorder owing to ongoing political and social conflicts, wars, hunger, disease, injustice, poverty and economic hardships, or living in a state of turbulence - a state in between the states of anxiety and turmoil where we have limited economic opportunities for all conjoined with lesser level of social disorder, but nevertheless without mass scale upheavals and conflicts. Irrespective of the state we are in, depending on our present state of socio-economic, political, geographic and cultural situation and context, we find ourselves searching for the state of equilibrium where we can live with positivity, optimism, inner peace, tranquility, happiness and success. Attaining this positive inner state to overcome anxiety, turbulence, or turmoil we find ourselves in, requires a deeper look into real factors that lead to overcoming these negative and undesirous states.

The purpose of this treatise is to expound the alternatives to negativities, despair, depression, and despondency, in the form of resilience, optimism and positivity in thoughts, feelings, words, deeds and being. The result of this transformation in attitudes – both inner and outer – results in inner peace, tranquility, happiness, and a timeless outlook on life and its challenges, imbuing eternal happiness and endless triumph that starts in this very earthly existence but then transcends the constraints of time and space into a life of eternity immortalizing a human being.

Negativities in thoughts, feelings, words and deeds lead to enmities, conflicts, wanton destructions, wars, anxieties, depression, and inner spiritual and bodily

ailments, while positive inner states, thoughts, feelings, words and deeds lead to inner peace and tranquility, consequently promoting life, liberty, prosperity, health and happiness for all. This happens when we tap into the reservoirs of positive energies embedded deep within our souls and redirect them into positive channels for our own benefit first, then for the benefit of all and everything we decide to impact. This self-empowerment is vital for promotion of individual and collective inner peace, prosperity, and happiness for all that in turn leads to eternal bliss. This is the alchemy that transforms the raw material of one's inner being into a priceless gem of immense worth, luster and brilliance. So why settle on anything less than the true human potential and worth in this only life that one possesses to make it happen? Failure to do so, results in one's eternal regret and despair for the missed opportunity and unmaterialized potential.

This treatise starts with an explanation of the path of self-awareness and spiritual illumination, followed by an explanation of inner destructive qualities that hinder self-awareness and spiritual illumination. This is followed by an exposition of factors that lead to unleashing the reservoir of positive energy embedded deep within our souls, propelling each individual to the pinnacle of human achievement. This book invites all to reconsider being "bad" or negative and instead try being "good" or positive and see for themselves the harms and benefits respectively for doing that. It invites all to shun being negative, mean, vile and evil that amounts to wanton destruction of the inner treasures and obliviousness to one's own well-being with ramifications felt all around that person and instead, being positive, pleasant, optimistic and good and see the difference between the two, and learning to reach the pinnacle of human achievement. This treatise helps open the path to perfection, enlightenment, eternal happiness, and endless success, blocking everything that impedes that outcome. Every human being deserves the best this life has to offer and this treatise helps make that possible by first explaining the path that makes it possible, then challenging one to rise to the task and occasion by taking charge of one's own life and turning it around for the better.

To present a cure for the ills of this age of anxiety, turbulence and turmoil, we will draw from the wisdom and timeless treasures of one of the finest exponents of spirituality, self-awareness, inner reformation, and inner transformation with ramifications for the outer renewal, of not just the Islamic civilization but of the entire human civilization – Imam Abu Hamid Muhammad Al-Ghazali (1058-1111 A.D.), popularly known as Ghazali – that he expounded for the benefit of humanity till the end of times. This exposition, driven by the masterful insights and wisdom of Ghazali, begins by explaining the inner reality of human being and true purpose of life, and how they are tied to eternal happiness and endless success – a goal that

every human being desires and cherishes deep within. Once armed with that knowledge and insight, it goes on to explain the inner destructive characteristics that one must eradicate, followed by inner virtues and noble qualities that one must inculcate deep within, to effectively deal with the challenges of the modern age marked with anxieties, turbulence and turmoil, consequently achieving eternal happiness and endless triumph and in that process mark one's worldly life with resilience, positivity, optimism, inner peace, tranquility, true happiness and undiminishing everlasting success.

This book will be a succor to the helpless, an aid to the distressed whose plights are unbearable, a relief for those immersed in inner sufferings in the form of despair, depression, sadness, frustrations and inner void, a light for those who are surrounded with darkness, a guide for those searching for the truth, purpose and meaning of their lives, and a pathway for those desiring to become better and turn things around for themselves, their families, their communities, their nations and the world.

This treatise, based on Ghazali's timeless treasures of wisdom and eternal truths for the entire humanity, shows us the path to inner peace and bliss by ridding our souls of all of their negative propensities and imbuing them with positive energies, giving us a state of peace, eternal happiness, and endless success. In this process, one discovers the true meaning and purpose of one's life. Discovering the true purpose of one's life and working on the ramifications of that purpose, takes one's mind, heart and soul from the hardships and distresses of worldly life into a spiritual realm that imbues one with eternal happiness and endless triumph over all adversities. No society is immune from the darkest impulses of man wreaking havoc within and without and too often, religion has been used to tap into those dark impulses, instead of the Divine light. Peace we seek in the world today, begins in our own hearts. Ghazali's "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God", used extensively in this treatise, is a tremendous work, perhaps the most landmark work of the entire human civilization, as it reveals and challenges the concealed dark impulses of man and challenges the use of religion to satisfy and gratify those dark impulses and instead, brings in the Divine light into religion and into the heart of the human being heralding inner and universal peace.

It is extremely important for each and every human being to understand one's inner reality and purpose of life for which he or she is here. Only then we are able to put all our circumstances and happenings around us - whether good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant, easy or difficult to manage - in the right perspective, understanding the

reality of things, then taking remedial steps to turn our lives around for the better, irrespective of the situations we find ourselves in. This fosters resilience, inner peace, tranquility, and happiness that all of us desire in the deepest recesses of our hearts. The reward for this striving for self-awareness and inner illumination, followed by discarding inner ills that are personally injurious, and inculcating inner qualities that are personally beneficial, is nothing short of eternal happiness and endless triumph, starting in this worldly life, immortalizing the striver into an eternal life of felicity. That is the approach used in this book in its first three parts where first part deals with knowing the reality of human being and real purpose of life, second part deals with understanding the inner destructive qualities and dark inner impulses and ways to eradicate them, and third part deals with the most pristine positive sublime inner qualities that impart nothing but good and expounds on ways to inculcate them to drive out all darkness within. The light of wisdom permeating these writings will dispel darkness, negativities, detrimental impulses, despair deep within and will replace them instead with the desire to improve our lives or rebuild our shattered lives, inculcating resilience, positivity, optimism, inner peace, tranquility, happiness, eternal bliss and endless success. Consequently, the light emanating from deep within the soul, will envelope everything around the striver to that end. As this light increases in its intensity and spread, the more the darkness around dissipates, illuminating our inner beings, communities, nations, and the world, transforming things around for all in mysterious and remarkable ways. It may sound idealistic, but this book shows the art of the possible. In that process, it lights up the path to make what seem impossible possible through the timeless treasures of wisdom of one of the greatest sages and teachers, humanity has ever produced.

May the Divine Light of wisdom and guidance be the navigator of your ship of being, searching for peace and safety of a shore in the ocean of stormy waters of this ephemeral and transient worldly existence into an immortal existence of eternal bliss and everlasting triumph.

PREFACE

In the Name of God, the most Compassionate, the most Merciful

We begin this treatise with understanding the true purpose and worth of a human being. Knowing that, arms one with insights needed to put things in right perspective, that is in turn needed to eradicate all negativities within and filling the inner void with positive attitude and inner disposition needed, to transform one's life for the better. This transformation begins in the heart and soul of the human being and as this inner light strengthens, it goes out and transforms entire communities, nations and consequently the world. Therefore, it's imperative to know the reality of one's being and the purpose of one's life and how it ties into eternal happiness and endless triumph. We then need to know the factors that hold us back from this cherished goal and factors that facilitate its achievement. This provides us with invaluable insights into impediments that need to be avoided and noble inner qualities that need to be inculcated to complete our journey to the unassailable state of resilience, positivity, optimism, inner peace, tranquility, eternal happiness and endless triumph, irrespective of our current state of anxiety, turbulence or turmoil.

Part 1: Knowing One's Inner Reality Paves the Path to Resolving Crises, Conflicts and Challenges Faced by Humanity Today

Ghazali, in his book "*Kimiya-e-Sa'adat*" or "Alchemy or Transformative Agent of Change for Eternal Happiness and Endless Success" written in Persian, explains eternal happiness and reality and purpose of life as follows [1]:

Countless and infinite gratitude and praise, equivalent to the stars of the heaven, drops of the rainfall, leaves of the trees, sand particles of the deserts, and atoms of the heavens and the earth, belong to God alone, Whose inherent attribute is His Oneness, and Majesty, Greatness, Highness and Excellence are His peculiar characteristics and sublime attributes. No human being is aware of the perfection of His Majesty. No one has the way in the reality of His Gnosis except Him. Rather to admit inability to attain the reality of His Gnosis, is the climax of the Gnosis of His intimates and friends, and to admit inability in His praise and hymn, is the climax of the Divine glorification by the angels and the prophets. To become astonished on the first ray of His Majesty, is the climax of the intellect of the intelligent ones. To become wonder struck in search of the proximity of His Beauty, is the climax of the wayfarers and the spiritual travelers of the mystic way. Its basis is the leaving of the hope of Gnosis and to leave the desires of

one's own base self. To claim perfection in the matter of His Gnosis is to think of similarity and likeness. All eyes have a share in bedazzlement in witnessing the Beauty of His Being. By seeing His wondrous works and creations, the necessary Gnosis is the fruit borne by all intellects. No person should be such that one is capable of contemplating the Greatness of His Being. No heart should be such that it may remain inattentive to the wondrous works of His, even for a moment as to what their reality is and whose Power, they are manifestation of. It is so that one may recognize that all are definitely the signs of His Power, and illuminations of His Greatness. All marvels and wonders that are there, emerged from His Wisdom, and all reflections of beauty are His creations alone. Whatever is there, it is from Him and due to Him. Rather, all that is, it is He. As in reality, nothing has existence except Him. Rather, the existence of all is the reflection of the light of His Being.

O dear beloved! Know it fully well that God has not created human being for play, vanity and idle pursuits. Rather, one's responsibility and the dangers lying therein are both tremendous, as if one is not eternal [in origin] but certainly one is to live forever. That is, if one is not from always (or lived from eternity), one will be for always. Though one's body is insignificant being a structure made of clay, but the reality of one's soul is tremendous and endearing being Divine. Though its origin is mixed with the qualities of the animals, beasts, devils, and their impurities, but when it is put to hardships, it becomes purified of its impurities and attains the capability of Divine proximity. It is its function to be the worst of the lowest and to be the best of the highest. Its lowest ebb is that by falling into the level of animals, beasts and devils, it gets entangled in the entrapment of anger and desire. Its pinnacle is that it (soul) reaches the rank of angels [i.e., into the spiritual realm] and sheds the entanglements of desire and anger [and all negativities that are their manifestations] and make them its prisoners instead, and it becomes their master and king. When this rank of kingship is gained, one becomes worthy of Divine worship and servitude. This capacity to worship is the attribute of the angels and is the perfection of the rank of human being. When one gets the taste of the love of Divine Beauty, one cannot pass a moment deprived of the Divine Sight. The sight of the Unending Beauty and Grace becomes one's paradise. The paradise of eye, stomach and carnal pleasures becomes insignificant and worthless to one. As the basis of human being is imperfect and insignificant in the beginning of one's birth, hence attaining perfection is not possible without hardship and treatment, like the alchemy that purifies the brass and copper and renders it into gold is extremely difficult. Everyone cannot identify it. Likewise, this alchemy that purifies the basis of human being from the impurities of beastly and animalistic habits and brings to it the angelic [spiritual] purification due to which it attains the eternal bliss. It is very difficult to attain this alchemy [that is the transformative agent of change,] and every person does not know it. The objective of writing this treatise is to state the elements of this alchemy which is in fact the alchemy of the eternal bliss. For this reason, we have named this book as "*Kimiya-e-Sa'adat*" or "Alchemy or Transformative Agent of Change for Eternal Happiness and Endless Success". The name "alchemy" is very befitting to this book. The reason is that in copper and gold, there is no difference other than yellowness and weight, and by this alchemy [that transforms copper into gold,] there is no other object but to become rich in this world. The worldly life is a few days long. The worldly wealth

is nothing in itself. There is a world of difference between the habits of the cattle and the attributes of the angels. The fruit of this alchemy is eternal bliss [and everlasting success]. There is no end to its duration [as it is everlasting and will be there forever and ever, immortalizing a human being]. There is no end to the types of its blessings. No impurity can enter and interfere into its purity and lucidity. This book in reality is the alchemy. Other than this (i.e., the teachings and expositions presented in this book "*Kimiya-e-Sa'adat*" or "Alchemy or Transformative Agent of Change for Eternal Happiness and Endless Success"), to name anything else as alchemy, is nothing but allegorical.

O dear beloved! You should know that as the alchemy of [transforming copper and other base elements into] gold is not found in the cottage of every old lady, rather it is found in the treasures of the highly affluent persons and the kings. Likewise, the alchemy of eternal bliss [and everlasting triumph] is also not found everywhere. Rather it is found in the Divine treasure. This Divine treasure in the heavens, is the beings of the angels and on the earth, is the purified hearts of the [true] Prophets [of God]. Whosoever will search for this alchemy anywhere except in the court of Prophethood, will go astray and ultimately will be defrauded and deceived. One will be getting nothing but vain fancy. One's poverty will become apparent on the Day of Judgment, and the entire creation will know one's counterfeit (false) coins, and everyone's misdirected intellect will become sane [and will come to know of the reality and the truth that one was oblivious to in all of one's life]. One will hear the call of the [Divine] proclamation:

لَّقَدْ كُنتَ فِي غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ هَٰذَا فَكَشَفْنَا عَنكَ غِطَاءَكَ فَبَصَرُكَ الْيَوْمَ حَدِيدٌ

"You were certainly in heedlessness and ignorance of this. We have removed from you the veil, so your eyesight today is sharp [as what was previously hidden from you is now in your sharp focus]." (Qur'an, Chapter 50, Verse 22)

One of the biggest mercy from among the mercies and blessings of the Most Merciful of all the merciful ones (i.e., God) is that He sent one hundred and twenty-four thousand prophets (Peace be upon all of them) in the world to teach the prescription (ingredients and making) of this alchemy to God's creation (people of the world), and to tell them to put the cash coin of the heart in the anvil of hardship, and to teach them the way of reformation of the heart from bad morals that cause hardness and muddiness of the heart, and the way of adorning the heart with good morals and sublime qualities, and to teach them to all the people [of the world]. Hence, God praised Himself by His own Glorification and Sovereignty [of His Dominion] so He declared His attribute of sending of the Prophets [and in particular, His Messenger Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)] and referred to it as a favor of His on the creation and said:

يُسَبِّحُ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ الْمَلِكِ الْقُدُّوسِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ ﴿١﴾

هُوَ ٱلَّذِى بَعَثَ فِى ٱلْأُمِّيِّـۧنَ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُوا۟ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَايَـٰتِهِۦ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ ٱلْكِتَـٰبَ وَٱلْحِكْمَةَ وَإِن كَانُوا۟ مِن قَبْلُ لَفِى ضَلَـٰلٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٢﴾

"Glorifies all that is in the heavens and on the earth for God, the King, the Sacred, the Mighty, the Wise. It is He Who sent among the unlettered a Messenger [Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)] from among themselves who recites to them His revelations and purifies them [with an inner purification of the soul] and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom. And prior to it, they were in ignorance manifest." (Qur'an, Chapter 62, Verses 1-2)

The [Arabic] word "*yuzakkihim*" (meaning "purifies them with an inner purification of their hearts and souls, from all impurities and muddiness, in all of their forms and manifestations") [in the above verse] refers to the same reprehensible [inherent] traits and qualities that are the qualities of the animals and from which the Messenger of God [Prophet Muhammad] (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) gets them released from [or purifies them through the process of inner purification and spiritual transformation through his sublime teachings and spiritual perfection]. The [Arabic] words "*Yu'allimuhumul kitaaba wal-hikmata*" [meaning "and teaches them the Book and Wisdom" in the same above verse] refers to it that he adorns them with the dress of the attributes of angels. And this is the very objective and purpose of this alchemy (i.e., the transformative agent of complete inner and spiritual transformation) that a human being should become purified and cleansed of all harmful and uncalled for things (i.e., all inner defects and harmful negative propensities of the soul) [that are detrimental to the human well-being], and should be adorned with the attributes of [inner spiritual] perfection. The greatest and the most excellent of the all the alchemies is the alchemy that one should turn one's face away from the world (worldliness, materialism, selfish desires, and all reprehensible, low, and negative qualities) and become attentive to God Almighty as has been taught to the Messenger of God (Peace and blessings of God be upon him):

وَٱذْكُرِ ٱسْمَ رَبِّكَ وَتَبَتَّلْ إِلَيْهِ تَبْتِيلًا

"*Wadhkurusma rabbika wa tabattal ilayhi tabteela*"
"And remember the name of your Lord and devote yourself [to Him] with a complete devotion." (Qur'an, Chapter 73, Verse 8)

[Arabic word] "*Tabteela*" [in above verse] means the detachment from all besides God Almighty, and to leave oneself completely surrendered before God Almighty and hand oneself over to the prerogative of God Almighty [by placing one's trust in Him alone and looking at Him alone in the disposal of all of one's affairs]. This is the brief description of this alchemy [of eternal happiness and never-ending success]. Its details are very lengthy and boundless. But its title is to know four things, [and] its essential elements are to know four dealings, and each essential element has ten basic principles.

The four titles [of this alchemy of eternal happiness and endless success] are:

(1) Knowing one's own self,
(2) Knowing God,
(3) Knowing the reality of the world, and
(4) Knowing the reality of the Hereafter.

To know the above four things is in fact the title of knowing *Islam* (i.e., submission to the Will of God). But the affairs of the essential elements of *Islam* are four.

The two essential elements relate to the outer self ("*Zahir*") and the two related to inner self ("*Batin*").

The two essential elements relating to the outer self are:
(1) To obey the commands of God. These are called the [outer] acts of worship ("*'Ibada*").
(2) To keep them in view in the matter of one's movements and livelihood. These are called the [social] dealings ("*Mu'amalaat*").

The two essential elements relating to the inner self ("*Batin*") are:

(1) To keep the heart [or soul] purified from all bad [inner] morals like anger, miserliness, arrogance, pride, self-righteousness, etc. These [bad and low inner character traits or] morals are called "*Muhlikaat*" (negativities or inner vices or destructive characteristics of the soul) and "*Aqabaat*" (the dark and narrow places where people become victims of robbers) in the way of faith.
(2) To adorn the heart [or soul] with good [inner] morals like patience, gratitude, love, hope, trust in God, etc. These morals are called "*munajjiyaat*" (positive characteristics or all exalted inner character traits of the soul that bring it salvation, felicity, true [eternal] happiness, and [everlasting] success).

The first [of the four] essential elements in which there is mention of worship [of God] consists of ten foundations. They are:

(1) In the matter of beliefs of *Ahl al-Sunnah* (i.e., those who are on the authentic traditional methodology that relies on an unbroken chain of transmission and certified scholarship at all levels [of conducting outward lives, inner faith and spirituality] that goes back to Prophet Muhammad [Peace and blessings of God be upon him] and through him to God Almighty),
(2) In the matter of seeking knowledge,
(3) In the matter of cleanliness (or outer purity),
(4) In the matter of Prayer (to God),
(5) In the matter of Zakat (or mandatory poor-due or charity),
(6) In the matter of fasting,
(7) In the matter of *Hajj* (or pilgrimage to *Ka'ba* in Makkah that is a symbol of God and of His Mercy on earth),

(8) In the matter of recitation of the Holy Qur'an,
(9) In the matter of remembrance of God, invocations, and supplications, and
(10) In the matter of arranging the litanies [to invoke God for all of one's needs - both material and spiritual].

The second essential element relating to the mutual dealings [with all people] also has ten foundations [or principles]:
(1) Manners of taking meals,
(2) Manners of marriage,
(3) Manners of trade and vocations,
(4) Manners of seeking the lawful [and refraining from unlawful],
(5) Manners of companionship,
(6) Manners of seclusion,
(7) Manners of journeys and travels,
(8) Manners of recitals ("*Sama'"* or devotional recital related to love and longing for God) and [resulting spiritual] ecstasy,
(9) Manners of enjoining good and prohibiting evil, and
(10) Manners for the rulers and the ruled.

The third essential element relating to the "*Muhlikaat*" (or destructive evils of the soul) also has ten foundations [or principles]:
(1) Manners of [inner] self-discipline [and spiritual exercises to curb the base desires of the lower self ("*Nafs*")],
(2) Manners of cure for over-indulgence in food and carnal pleasures,
(3) Manners of cure of excessive talking and of evils of the tongue,
(4) Manners of cure of anger, arrogance and false esteem,
(5) Manners of cure of love of the world,
(6) Manners of cure of love for property [and wealth],
(7) Manners of cure of pomp and esteem (self-glorification and self-aggrandizement),
(8) Manners of cure of show off and hypocrisy,
(9) Manners of cure of haughtiness and self-righteousness, and
(10) Manners of cure of pride and heedlessness.

The fourth essential element relating to "*Munjiyaat*" (or noble inner qualities of the soul that bring it salvation and felicity) also has ten foundations [or principles]:
(1) Repentance [to God from wrongs one has committed and seeking God's forgiveness],
(2) Patience [over adversities] and gratitude [to God for Divine blessings and favors],
(3) Fear [of God] and hope [in God],
(4) Poverty [or state of absolute neediness before God] and asceticism,
(5) [Good] Intention, sincerity, and truthfulness,
(6) Devotion and self-accountability,
(7) [Spiritual] Contemplation (or "*Muraqaba*" or contemplating God's gaze upon one's heart, self-reflection and critical self-evaluation),
(8) Unity [or oneness] of God and trust in God,
(9) Love of God, and

(10) Death and its remembrance (or contemplating one's own inevitable mortality and end of one's worldly existence in order to put things in right perspective).

This is the list of essential elements and the fundamentals of the book "*Kimiya-e-Sa'adat*" or "Alchemy or Transformative Agent of Change for Eternal Happiness and Endless Success". We shall explain the four titles and forty principles clearly and would restrain our pen from indulging in difficult phrases and complexities so that this book becomes easily understandable. It is so because anyone who wants to do research or go deep into the complexities, should consult and study our Arabic books like "*Ihya al-'Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God", "*Jawahir al-Qur'an*" or "Jewels of the Qur'an" or other compilations on this discipline. The purpose of this book is to explain [this alchemy of eternal happiness and everlasting triumph] to the general public.

Ghazali then goes on to provide a marvelous exposition of the four titles (or requirements) and forty principles of this alchemy or transformative agent of eternal happiness and endless triumph. A detailed exposition of the same forty principles of alchemy of eternal bliss is provided in tremendous details by Ghazali in his four-volume compendium of wisdom "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God". Ghazali provides details of the four requirements of alchemy or transformative agent of eternal bliss, after above introduction of his book "*Kimiya-e-Sa'adat*" or "Alchemy or Transformative Agent of Change for Eternal Happiness and Endless Success". In his exposition of the first title or requirement for attaining eternal bliss and endless success, namely "Knowing One's Own Self", Ghazali writes [2]:

Knowing One's Own Self

Dear beloved! Beware that to get to know one's self is the key to the realization of God. Hence it has been stipulated by Him that:

مَنْ عَرَفَ نَفْسَهُ فَقَدْ عَرَفَ رَبَّهُ

"One who recognized one's own self, has recognized one's Lord".

سَنُرِيهِمْ ءَايَٰتِنَا فِى ٱلْءَافَاقِ وَفِىٓ أَنفُسِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ ٱلْحَقُّ

"We shall show them Our signs in the farthest reaches of the universe and in their own selves (souls), until it becomes clearly manifested to them that this is the truth." (Qur'an, Chapter 41, Verse 53).

Dear beloved! Nothing in this entire world is nearer to you than your own 'self' (*Nafs*). Therefore, if you would not try to be cognizant of your own being, i.e., of yourself, what

else would you try to look in vain for? If you think that 'we reckon and recognize our selves' then you are surely mistaken, as such knowledge cannot possibly be of any use. It can, under no circumstances, be the key to the Gnosis ("*Ma'rifa*"), to the human attempt to the cognizance of the Supreme Lord and the Master of the universe (i.e., God). For, like this, even the animals know of themselves. They too can make out such visible parts of their body as their head, their mouth, their hands, their feet, and their flesh, etc., whereas you know of your other self to the extent that you take your meals when you are hungry, pick a fight with someone whom you are angry with and when urge of carnal desires overpowers you, you enter into matrimony. Hence, what is the difference between you and these animals? In fact, what you should know is, as to what you are, from where have you come from and where will you go? What is the reason of you having come here [in this world]? For what purpose were you created by the Lord? What, in short, is good for you and what is bad for you?

Even the birds and the beasts are endowed with the qualities you possess, besides some characteristics of the Satan. Yet, there are traits of your character in which you and the angels are at par. What then are your transient and permanent features? What is your genesis, the essence? So, unless you get to grips with these vital 'basics' about yourself, you will not be able to attain the status of the blessed.

Each one of these qualities has its own distinct 'food' that nourishes it, sustains, and promotes its growth, resulting in the promotion of goodness and the praiseworthy behavior. The betterment of the animals, as one would observe, lies in eating, drinking and in being healthy and strong. Therefore, if you are also an animal then you should follow their ways day in and day out, fill your belly to the brim and fulfil your carnal desires to the utmost.

Assault and killing are the principal characteristics of animals of the jungle. It naturally behooves them to do so, whereas the evil, its ramifications, villainous deeds, and the treachery are the signs and symbols of the devil. So, if you think you are also one of these devils, you should please your heart by following in their footsteps. On the other hand, unlike the animals and the beasts, to seek the magnificence of God is food for the souls of the angels. And if you are from the angels, you should, like them, try to behold the glory of God, so that you are freed from immoral sensual pleasures and arrogant anger on your fellow human beings.

Engrain the spirit in you then, to search for the truth in yourself. Do so with such dedication that you may realize that the uniform qualities created by God between you, the animals, the birds of prey and the beasts are for the common good, not in order that you too may become beastly and atrocious. The animals, birds, and the beasts have been made to serve you.

The discerning and the knowers of God have termed this status 'of being in the path of God and before God' as '*Janib-e-Ilahiya*'. People (i.e., common folk) call it Paradise. As such, it is your duty to become fully alive to the great, virtuous intrinsic worth instilled in you by God so that you may attain His Gnosis ("*Ma'rifa*"). Indeed, one is the most

unfortunate person, who, despite knowing the value of '*Deen*' (Path to God) happens to remain away from it.

Dear beloved! If you sincerely wish to have an insight into your inner self, know that God has produced you of two things, namely, the outer structure, the body which is visible to the eye and the inner self called the '*Nafs*' (self), '*Qalb*' (heart), or '*Ruh*' (soul). However, they can be seen through the eyes of the '*Batin*' (the inner being), i.e., by the other visible, unobvious self. This very verity is the main thing, the inviolable basis, the prime meaning of existence. All other things are subservient to it (i.e., to the heart). Hence when we talk of speaking our heart out, we really mean, the truth. Sometimes it is called the 'Soul' ("*Ruh*"). Sometimes it is termed as the '*Nafs*'. The '*Qalb*', the heart does not mean the lump of flesh situated in the left side of the human body which the animals too possess and even the dead have for that matter. This '*Qalb*', i.e., the heart is the real undeniable fact for mankind. It is the unique, genuine, and prime truth which, though manifest, cannot be perused by the human eyes. It pertains to the [seen or visible] realm called '*Shahada*'. It is a lofty domain. The goodness emerges from it in all its splendor!

This lump of flesh, the heart, is the knight-rider of the body. The rest of the body is its troops or subservient to its commands. The heart is the king and the commander of this force. Its principal duty is the attainment of the "*Ma'rifa*" or Gnosis of God, the perception and acquisition of His sublime beneficence due to the inherent characteristics bestowed by Him in human being's heart to this effect. It throbs in His love. All the time it is vocal, reciting His praise, that He alone is worthy of being worshipped. Only He, it is continuously intoning, has the power to grant mercy or levy punishment on His people. Retribution and reward are only His prerogative, He alone can bless or bar. Thus, wholeheartedly striving to possess the "*Ma'rifa*" or Gnosis of God is the key to this goal.

O dear beloved! You should understand that you should evaluate it, since your self is an invaluable gem par excellence. It has angelic kinship. The highest zenith is its heaven. It is a noble wayfarer on the path to the ultimate exalted goal of God. In this short journey through life, it remains in trade and agriculture and other vocations while travelling onwards [towards its final and ultimate destination] all the time.

Dear friend! Understand that unless you cast a glance within yourself, you will not be able to comprehend the truth about the heart ("*Qalb*"). Once you get to fathom the heart, thereafter you should search for its army, i.e., its invincible force. Then try to recognize the connection between the "*Ma'rifa*" (or Gnosis of God) and "*Sa'adah*" (eternal happiness and everlasting success). The grandeur of the heart cannot be denied as such in comparison, to the superficial body, which is like a wooden frame, a mere dormant infrastructure. It is nothing. It is like the dead. By "*Qalb*", i.e., the heart, we mean the veracity of the soul ("*Ruh*"). Without soul, the body is dead and cadaverous. Should one close the eyes for a while and banish all thoughts of one's physical being, erstwhile fully visible to sight and get engrossed in search of one's self, one's soul, one would find one's quest. Indeed, the real quest worth making is that of

the heart. It would also apprise one of the Hereafter. Barring whatever is to the contrary, one would simultaneously realize the immanence of the heart.

What is the 'heart'? What are heart's special characteristics? The Divine Law does not permit its academic debate. Hence Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) and his noble companions have not broached the issue whereupon the following verses were proclaimed by God in Qur'an:

وَيَسْـَٔلُونَكَ عَنِ ٱلرُّوحِ ۖ قُلِ ٱلرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّى

"And they ask you concerning the soul. Say, the soul is a command of my Lord." (Qur'an, Chapter 17 [Children of Israel], Verse 85)

أَلَا لَهُ ٱلْخَلْقُ وَٱلْأَمْرُ ۗ

"Behold, His is the creation ('*Khalq*') and His is the command ('*Amr*')." (Qur'an, Chapter 7, Verse 54)

In the realm of the "*Khalq*", the creation and that of the "*Amr*", the ordination is completely different from each other. The "*Khalq*" (the creation), the elements of dimensional measurement, the quantity and mass are imminent. In the dictionary, the meaning "*Khalq*" (or creation) refers to estimation. But the human heart cannot be put to this test, as it does not accept division. If the heart could be divisible, the premise could hold good, whereby it could either be a sage or a complete novice on an issue, at a time. Thus, a person being an "*'Alim*" (scholar or person of knowledge) and "*Jahil*" (ignoramus) simultaneously is inconceivable. In antithesis, though soul ("*Ruh*") has been created by God, it is likewise utterly indivisible, nor has it any relationship to the code of the mass, the measurement, or the quantification. The "*Amr*" (command) is God's Will, manifest and paramount.

Also, those who consider soul to be something which is far, distant, and ancient, having span, are all wrong. How can the span, which is circumscribed, not be subject to limitation and authority? When the soul is veritably genuine and overriding, how can the physical frame, the body overrule the soul? As such, how can soul be the "*Ard*" or the span?

Similarly, those who have called the soul the body, are self-contradicting and as such deceived. Surely, the body can be disintegrated into fragments but not the soul, which is indivisible as aforementioned. Raising a finer point on the issue, the soul in the animals is supposed to be dispelled in its final qualms but the real soul which we call the heart, is the grand venue of God's Gnosis ("*Ma'rifa*") but the animals are devoid of this [second soul]. Soul is neither physical body nor span but is a pure angelic gem whose assessment is difficult, not allowed to be broached or amplified. One can only have a fair knowledge of it within the prescribed parameters:

وَٱلَّذِينَ جَـٰهَدُوا۟ فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا ۚ

"Those who strive for Our sake (in Our paths), We shall surely guide them to Our ways." (Qur'an, Chapter 29, Verse 69)

وَمَا يَعْلَمُ جُنُودَ رَبِّكَ إِلَّا هُوَ

"None knows the armies of your Lord but He." (Qur'an, Chapter 74, Verse 31)

The above Qur'anic verses clearly signify that the heart has been specifically earmarked for the Hereafter. The yearning for the blessings of God is its objective. These blessings are dependent on the Gnosis of God. One gets an idea about the author or the producer of a thing by one's product. The discerning senses of human being help one adjudge them, their worth. The sublime Creator's works of the wonders of the world, each ingenious and unique in its own forte can, however, be appreciated and admired for their exquisite charm only through the acumen of the external and internal capability of discernment in the human being. The ostensible qualities of perception and penetration are mainly bodily functions in contrast, but the actual objective of the heart is the "*Ma'rifa*" or Gnosis of God which cannot be superficially achieved. The sensory capabilities of the body are thus the noose (i.e., "animal soul"), whereas the body is the upholder and the carrier of both, the noose and the rider (i.e., the real soul or the "human soul"). Hence the uniting frame (i.e., the body) is a prerequisite for the heart, which is made up of water, clay, and heat. Therefore, it is not so strong. It is exposed to the danger of death gravely due to the dearth of requisite food in the inner ("*Batin*") and the outer ("*Zahir*") being, due to the inner and outer wants, owing to the elements like the beast, like fire and water, as the basic evolutionary ingredients in human being. Therefore, it naturally craves for food to eat and water to drink. No wonder, it has all along felt the need for these two forces to combat the physical enemies on the one hand [that threaten human life and its wellbeing] and greed and anger on the other [as these and other inner vices threaten the life and wellbeing of the soul]. These are forces of the inner. Hence, first comes the essence of soul, then its armies and thereafter the "struggle" (i.e., spiritual striving in the path of God) against these wicked forces of the inner. Hence, first comes the essence of the soul [also known as "human soul", as opposed to the "animal soul" that contributes only to the life of human bodily organs and senses], then its armies or forces and thereafter the "struggle" or striving against these wicked inner forces (i.e., evils and negative propensities).

Since it is not possible to see the unseen things and pursue an unseen enemy of both the body and the inner self, hence the need for these sensory organs of the body and for inner sensibilities, became necessary. [Human senses of] Seeing, smelling, tasting, touching, and hearing are the basic sensory organs of the body. Each one of them performs a singular duty. If any one of them goes awry, it will hamper things and the matters of this world (i.e., worldly life) and the Hereafter will be affected. These forces of the inner and the outer [human faculties] are under the control of the heart. God in His Supreme wisdom has made them subservient to the heart, as per His sublime pleasure, so that they may take care of the human body. It is so that the heart may get its reward, fetch its prey, be blessed [with the Divine bounty of Gnosis] and in consequence, accomplish its bargain for the Hereafter. These forces of the good, serve

with much marked devotion, as the angels do, and take profound pride in obeying God in profound delight. They never act against His wishes. The details about the heart are rather lengthy.

Dear beloved! To quote an example, the body is like a city, the hands and feet are like workers in this city. The desire is its prime mover (i.e., instigator). The anger is like city's police chief. The heart is its king and the reason is its Prime Minister. The king needs all of them to run the government but the lust, which is a strong motivating force, is evil and provocative. On the other hand, the intellect, which is like the wise Prime Minister, always opposes it so that the funds of the government are not misappropriated or usurped. The anger, which is like the police chief is always erratic, reactionary, and overreaching its bounds. Under the circumstances, the king, who is above all of them, takes stock of all things firmly, consults its Prime Minister (i.e., intellect) and does not allow matters to go out of control. It clearly indicates that desire and anger play their respective roles [within bounds], and to nip the evil in the bud becomes the prime duty of the king. That is the position of the heart.

Food and water have been provided by God Almighty to protect the body. As such, they are the servants of the body. The body, in turn has been created to hold and bear the burden of the senses, i.e., these discerning agents of the sensations, hence they act as the servants of the body. These senses or sensory capabilities are as such the watchdogs of the reason to learn and assimilate facts for the discernment and true appreciation of God's amazing, awe-inspiring creations. The intellect, on its part, is meant to act as their torch-bearing, glowing path finder - the guide to enable human being to relish blissfully the unique splendor of Divine Beauty – God's Beauty par excellence, in what He has evolved and designed out of nothingness, in this universe. So, if this (i.e., witnessing Divine Beauty) is the "Eden of the heart", the intellect (or "*Aql*") is its servant. As soon as a human being's heart becomes fascinated in this manner and enchanted by His glory, one becomes the blessed servant of God. This is depicted in the following holy verse [from Qur'an]:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ ٱلْجِنَّ وَٱلْإِنسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

"I (i.e., God) have created *Jinns* (supernatural invisible creatures that are present on earth) and human beings only to worship Me." (Qur'an, Chapter 51, Verse 56)

God gave human being the heart and its kingdom to reign over. He provided one with the army - the force to do so, also the wherewithal to ride, in order to make one rise to the higher realms of grandeur. Therefore, if anyone wants to live up to the lofty grace of this exalted position and wishes to honor one's pledge to God Almighty, to obey Him like a humble servant, one should worship Him with one's heart and soul, and one should traverse the path prescribed to this effect. Under the circumstances, one should install oneself on the throne of the king and make being in God's presence one's ultimate aim. One must follow one's heart, do good deeds and consider the Hereafter as one's real country of permanent abode. As such, one should treat this world as transient, a temporary passage for journey through life, for final rendezvous with God. One should consider the body as the riding mount, hands, and feet the servants,

intellect the Prime Minister and the invigilator of the worldly affairs. One should take the anger to be the strict judge and should utilize one's God-gifted five senses as one's intelligence agents. One should likewise use one's mind to sift the evidence thus obtained and safeguard oneself from all evil pitfalls and dangers in one's way. The Prime Minister, which is the intellect, should similarly be made to oversee that all is well within its domain and that its force, its army does not revolt against it. One must chalk out such a plan so that one's charge remains a haven of peace. This ensures that one will deserve blissful bounty and rich rewards from God. So much so, that one will soon don the crown of success promised to the faithful by Him. Otherwise, one will be counted among those who lost everything. Such a wretched person will be taken to task and retribution will be one's lot.

Consequently, one should deduce that each person has the direct connection with the forces of the inner being, the soul. For this purpose, one is endowed with special qualities and characteristics. The bad qualities and characteristics ruin one, while the good ones raise one to the high grounds of the fortunate. Although multifarious, four amongst these dispositions (or inner qualities) can be treated as of principal categories in human being:

1) The characteristics of the [wild savage] beasts,
2) The angelic qualities,
3) The Satanic vices,
4) The traits of animals.

For instance, the human greed makes one subject to unholy impulses while the normal urges, like those of eating, drinking, and resorting to fulfillment of natural sexual instincts, also possessed by animals, remain common to both (i.e., between human beings and animals). On the other hand, the [savage] beast-like qualities of human being of attacking and rending one's enemy apart by physical mayhem, are stimulated by an uncontrollable rage, resulting in serious altercations, petty quarrels and in slandering and abusing those one cannot tolerate.

In contra-distinction, the intellect, the wisdom in human being prompts one, to do seraphic deeds with underlying objective of doing the good and forestalling the bad, to please God. Such a person promotes the education (awareness and enlightenment) of people, helps them in many ways and is generally a ministering angel for one's fellow human beings. One appreciates the Divine truth and considers ignorance and bad behavior [towards anyone, being wrong and] undesirable.

As such, these particular inclinations of character, can be broadly symbolized with the scoundrelly hound-like trends, swine-like ways, the Satanic vices, and angelic habits. The dog for instance, is not ugly to see, but is apt to be unruly by habit. So much so, that at times it starts barking at its own kind. In the same manner, the pig is not the ugliest of the creatures, but it is generally abhorred owing to its latent craze for the dirty and defiled things. The very word swine is a severe word and an anathema. The Satan and the dog are similarly situated. The human being also has these traits. This is what

is meant by “Satanic qualities”. Its opposite is “angelic qualities”. These terms means being Satanic or being angel like, respectively.

That is why, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) stated, “A devil is virtually present in each person. I am also not immune to him but God, the Merciful, has superimposed and overpowered me over him. He (i.e., the devil) is helpless [against me]”.

Likewise, the human being is under orders and obligation to try and overcome the swine of lust and licentiousness and the cur of carnage and wild infuriation. The human being should, therefore, countermand all that is wicked and vicious. Undoubtedly, one who does so will be honored with such rewards by God, which accrue due to such outstanding behavior. Likewise, the ugly habits of bad character will lead one to ill fortune and [well deserved] punishment by God [out of sheer Divine justice].

One can visualize the condition of such a person. One would find oneself standing hand-cuffed before the dog, the swine, or the Satan. It stands to reason that if a believer is handed over to an unbeliever, the treatment that will be meted out to one is obvious. And if an angel is handed over to the swine, the cur or to the Devil, his condition would be worse than that of the believer. To one’s utter dismay and chagrin, the human being accursed with the trait of worldly wrath will find oneself in the shape of a horrid hound or a wolf and the one who has fallen prey to the lusts, will see oneself in the form of a swine, on the Day of Judgment. If a wolf is similarly seen in a dream by someone, it would mean that the person is a tyrant. In the case of the pig, one can infer that one is dirty and degraded. The farther a person gets from them and their like, the more one’s general demeanor and inner self will conform to how one conducts oneself.

Now that we know of the order-givers of the inner self, cast your eyes within on your inner self and try to assess for yourself as to which of them have influenced you the most and where you are situated. Beware that your acts and deeds will create in you a corresponding character trait which will make or mar you. Indeed, nothing but the good emerges out of the good. Likewise, if you are obedient to the swine of desire, you will have similar habits of profanity, shamelessness, avarice, flattery, filthiness, and that of being happy over the wickedness of the others. However, if you succeed in suppressing the swine [like qualities in your inner self], getting the better of it, you will be crowned with the qualities of contentment, grace, wisdom, piety, and selflessness, etc.

In case you are overtaken by the hound of horror and dread, then the damaging [inner] traits that will develop in you, will be those of being rash and unmindful of consequences, impurity, bragging, arrogance, wanton flaunting of your faults, taunting and torturing others, picking up fights and squabbles with others. Nevertheless, if you prevail over this dog of destruction, you will acquire the added qualities of patience, suavity, forgiveness, stability, bravery, tranquility, and saintliness (inner purity).

Likewise, if you obey the devil, whose prime task is to aid and abet the cur and the swine, to mislead people by his nefarious designs, to resort to trouble making,

dishonesty and adulteration, etc., you yourself would inherit these devilish qualities from him. But if you are able to defeat him by not being taken in by his guiles and keep on fortifying your forces of the intellect and the good, you will attain wisdom, Gnosis ("*Ma'rifa*"), knowledge, profound sagacity, capability and a beautiful inner character and outer demeanor ("*Husn ul Khulq*" or "*Husn al-Ikhlaq*"). These noble traits will be your constant companions and guides. They will sow the seeds of your good fortune with veritable grounding of good memories of you, forever.

In contrast, the bad deeds are called sins or vices. In their contra-distinction, the good deeds are called "'*Ibadah*" or worship of God. The heart is like a luminous looking glass or a polished mirror. The evil ways are like clouds and darkness. The bad character sullies and darkens the mirror of the heart. A person having such a character, can never have the benign blessings of God's Presence or witnessing God. One cannot be blessed with the blessing of sublime view of His beneficence. Verily, a lofty integrity of character is like light ("*Noor*"). Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) has said:

اتْبِعِ السَّيِّئَةَ الْحَسَنَةَ تَمْحُهَا

"One should perform a good deed after bad one so that it may remove its bad effect".

That is, one should perform a good deed soon after a bad one [that was done without realization of what one was doing due to ignorance, heedlessness, or under a wrong influence]. Only the one who will come purified of evil will be blessed. On the Day of Judgment, a human heart will either be bright or dark. Only the one with a shining face (representing the inner beauty of the heart) will be blessed:

إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى ٱللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ

"Except for the one who comes to God with a sound heart." (Qur'an, Chapter 26, Verse 89)

Right from the beginning of creation, human being's heart is solid like steel of which the translucent heart is made. One can see the entire universe in it, provided that it is safely guarded and not allowed to be tarnished. God Almighty has ordained so:

كَلَّا ۖ بَلْ ۜ رَانَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِم مَّا كَانُوا۟ يَكْسِبُونَ

"No indeed, what they have been earning has caused rust upon their hearts". (Qur'an, Chapter 83, Verse 14)

Dear beloved! You may say that since human being also possesses the traits and the characteristics of the beasts, devils, and animals, then how come the angel-like qualities are one's assets while the other things are transient? How can one ascertain that the human being has been created to have the character of the angels and in reality, has nothing to do with other things? The answer lies in the irrefutable fact that the human

being has been created as "*Ashraful Makhluqat*" or the most superior of all of God's creations. Thus, one is superior to the animals and the beasts. No doubt, the stature bestowed by God on each thing is the culmination of His Kindness towards it. For example, the horse is superior to the donkey as the donkey only carries weight, whereas a horse gallops bravely in the battle to the consummate command of the knight-rider, although in its own forte, the horse can also carry weight as the donkey does. Hence, there is a marked difference between them. If the horse did not have these qualities and a more graceful bearing, its stature would also have been reduced to that of the donkey to all intents and purposes.

Similarly, some people think that they have been made to eat, drink, and fulfil their urge for carnal pleasures. People of this kind waste away all their lives in such hapless pursuits. There are others who believe that they have been born only to belittle, degrade and overpower their adversaries and their fellow human beings. The winner or the vanquished, force majeure is applied to gain supremacy over them, whether they be Arabs, Turks, or Kurds [or any other race or ethnicity for that matter]. Obviously, both of these ideologies are wrong, since the aforementioned life of only eating, drinking and sexual conjugation is despondent on the element of desire. Even the animals have such desires. The camel is well known for its quality to consume huge quantities of food and water, whereas the pig has excessive carnal capabilities. How come then that the human being is regarded higher in status to them?

Also, the drive to overcome and subjugate others is due to a rising temper and anger. This natural phenomenon is also present, in may be argued, in the grazing animals and the wild creatures of the forests. Hence again, how come the human being is superior to them? Where is the difference and distinction [between human beings and animals]? The answer is self-explanatory that despite it (i.e., low base qualities that human being shares with animals), the redeeming quality the human being has in comparison, is that the human being, among all of the creations, is blessed with intellect, with which one also recognizes one's Supreme Master, the God. It also enables one to voluntarily appreciate and admire His handiwork, His creative genius. It also helps one to defeat one's mortal enemies, the wrath, and the greed. These (i.e., the lack of wrath, greed, and other base qualities of the lower self) are characteristics of the angels. Their very qualities make one rise above the [level of] birds, beasts, and animals. Hence, human being is superior to all things created and has a conspicuous edge over them. All of them are at one's beck and call. One is most superior of all created things ("*Ashraf al-Makhluqat*").

وَسَخَّرَ لَكُم مَّا فِي ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَمَا فِي ٱلۡأَرۡضِ جَمِيعٗا مِّنۡهُۚ

"And He has subjected to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth, all from Him." (Qur'an, Chapter 45, Verse 13)

As such, human being's greatness lies in the greatness of one's integrity, to the extent one excels in the stipulated virtues, the greatest of all achievements being the "*Ma'rifa*" or Gnosis of God. The rest of the traits pale down in comparison, although innumerable noble motivating forces (capabilities) have been bestowed upon human being for one's

glory. As such, it is food for thought that when human being dies, the evil salient traits like the [low base] desire and anger also die. What remains [of human being at and after death] is a 'gem' of high quality which is ornate in a seraphic manner with the "*Ma'rifa*" or Gnosis of God. It is one's constant companion. This gem is also the friend of the angels, who always humbly prone, prostrate in worship before Him, all the time:

فِي مَقْعَدِ صِدْقٍ عِندَ مَلِيكٍ مُّقْتَدِرٍ

"On a seat of truth, in the presence of an Omnipotent King." (Qur'an, Chapter 54, Verse 55)

Or, when a human being dies, the remains of one is a dark, blind thing - dark and tarnished on account of one's vices, but blind because of the absence of anger and arrogance which used to soothe and satisfy one ego [in the worldly life]. As a result of it, one dwells in this lowly realm inherited from the former region thereafter:

وَلَوْ تَرَىٰٓ إِذِ ٱلْمُجْرِمُونَ نَاكِسُوا۟ رُءُوسِهِمْ عِندَ رَبِّهِمْ

"You would see the criminals with bowed-down heads before their Lord." (Qur'an, Chapter 32, Verse 12)

It means that one will be in such a state when one will, in consequence, be sent to the "*Sijjeen*" (lowest and the most grievous realm of existence in the afterlife) with the Satan. The interpretation of the term "*Sijjeen*" is not known to all. Hence, God has ordained:

وَمَآ أَدْرَىٰكَ مَا سِجِّينٌ

"And what do you know what the '*Sijjeen'* is?" (Qur'an, Chapter 83, Verse 8)

The wonders of the world of the heart are unlimited. The exalted status, the veritable pedestal of piousness that the heart has in comparison with all the organs of the body is on account of the fact that the heart is novel per se, but most people are unmindful of it. The grandeur of the heart and its piety is on account of two principal reasons:

1) Due to "'*Ilm*" or knowledge, and
2) Due to "*Qudra*" or power and capability.

The greatness due to knowledge is in turn owing to two causes: One is known to all and is self-evident while the other is hidden and subtle. No one can fathom it. The capacities and the power of the heart to assimilate knowledge with all its intricacies is within its scope. Although it is indivisible, it can easily read and comprehend numerology, arithmetic, medicine, astrology, Divine Law, etc. It encompasses all forms of education, which are contained in the heart like sand is in the desert. Within no time, it covers the distance from the earth to the sky and from the east to the west due to its continuous movement and sagacity. Although it's on the ground, it measures the far

reaches of the vast horizons and is aware of all stars and constellations in the galaxy and the distances between them. It takes out the fish from water by a tackle, shoots birds down from the sky to the ground, makes animals like camel, horse, and elephant obey one's command. The five sensory perceptions of the body are its vocation. It's evident that all of them are directed towards one's heart. They are the doors to discernment in the spiritual realm (realm of the souls), a door is open in the heart [towards the realm of the souls]. Most people, on the other hand, only care about the material world (the physical realm) and consider these physical sensibilities as the only course to the attainment of knowledge.

Actually, these two doors are rather small, nevertheless, there are many doors in the heart which are open to receive many kinds of knowledge and education. Of the two premises, let us take the first, i.e., when one goes to sleep and has a dream, these sensory organs become dormant but the door of the heart opens up, with the result that in the realm of the souls and "*Loh Mahfoodh*" or the "Preserved Tablet" (i.e., God's Book of Records that contains the knowledge of the past, present and future), one starts seeing things destined (of which God is already aware) or gets to know of what is going to happen in future. At times, one gets indications of things to come for which interpretation is to be sought. This is despite the fact that, as a rule, it is thought that one who keeps awake is more worthy of the "*Ma'rifa*" or Gnosis. Yet they realize that, generally speaking, there is less likelihood of their coming to know these things of the "'*Alam al-Ghaib*" (the domain of the unseen and unknown) by dint of these sensory agencies.

It is not possible to dwell on the subject of these dreams in a casual vein but let it suffice to say that the heart is like a clean polished mirror and the Preserved Tablet ("*Loh Mahfoodh*") is like a mirror in which the pictures of all things in the realm of physical existence ("'*Alam Maujoodat*"), the realm we are in, can be seen. When the clean polished mirror [of the heart] is placed facing these facsimiles, they become clearly visible. No wonder then, that as such, when the heart is like a clean polished mirror and one disconnects one's self from deflecting stimuli of these sensations [from the physical realm of existence], one gets in close proximity to the Preserved Tablet ("*Loh Mahfoodh*"). As long as the heart is filled with such veritable sensations, it strolls around in ecstasy in the spiritual realm ("'*Alam Ruhani*"). However, in the dream, these sensations cease but their image or thought lingers on. Whereas in "'*Alam Mithal*" (realm of imagination), the feeling or thought can be conceived, although at times, rather dimly. When human being dies, the veil is finally lifted. No perceptions or sensations [from the physical realm] remain. The matter (i.e., the truth, reality, and real nature of things) becomes transparent. The deceased is then told:

فَكَشَفْنَا عَنكَ غِطَآءَكَ فَبَصَرُكَ ٱلْيَوْمَ حَدِيدٌ

"Now, We have removed from you your veil and today your sight is sharp." (Qur'an, Chapter 50, Verse 22)

One replies:

رَبَّنَآ أَبْصَرْنَا وَسَمِعْنَا فَٱرْجِعْنَا نَعْمَلْ صَٰلِحًا إِنَّا مُوقِنُونَ

"Our Lord! We have seen and heard; return us [to the world] and we shall do righteous deeds; we are now sure [with certitude about the reality of matter]." (Qur'an, Chapter 32, Verse 12)

The second proof of the door of the heart being towards the "*'Alam al-Malakut*" or realm of the angels is that there is no one who may be immune to prudent thought and pious misgivings or fear of the likely straits ahead. Such thoughts do not emanate from the senses, but they emerge from the heart. One does not know the origin and source of these anticipated dangers. This analysis confirms that all knowledge does not emanate from the sensory organs. Furthermore, the heart actually pertains to the "*'Alam Ruhani*" or realm of the souls and not to this [material] world. Obviously, these sensory organs have been made for this world. Unless human being gets rid of this world's mundane considerations, one cannot make a smooth passage to the next one, where these sensory organs would be of no use whatsoever.

Do not, therefore, misconstrue that unless a human being goes into deep slumber or dies, the door of one's heart to the realm of the souls will not open. If one works hard, overcomes arrogant ire, purifies oneself, i.e., one's soul, of the evil, closes one's eyes, sits in a secluded place, exterminates all worldly thoughts and engrosses one's heart and soul most devotedly in the realm of the souls in such a manner that one does not utter a word by one's tongue but every fiber of it intones "*Allah*, *Allah*" (i.e., God's one and only personal name, whereas, "God" is a generic language specific way of referring to the Supreme Being who is the master, creator, sustainer and provider of everything that He has brought into existence) with every heartbeat, continuously until one becomes completely unaware of oneself and the entire world except God, the door of the blessings in one's heart will open up and will remain open. One would see in the state of wakefulness what others would do in sleep. Beautiful souls of the angels would descend on one in picturesque shapes. One would start beholding the prophets of God and be benefitted from them. The heavenly creatures of this world and next of the "*Malakoot*" - transcendent angelhood, would be visible to him. One, who is so fortunate would witness strange visions and supernatural things, far beyond one's conception. This saying of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) is about such a person. It elucidates that such things are possible without one being asleep or dead:

رُوِيَتْ لِيَ الْأَرْضُ فَأُرِيْتُ مَشَارِقَهَا وَمَغَارِبَهَا

"The whole earth was shown to me, so I saw its Easts and its Wests".

The following verse from the Holy Qur'an also bears on the issue:

وَكَذَٰلِكَ نُرِىٓ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ مَلَكُوتَ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ

"And thus, We showed [Prophet] Abraham the Kingdom (dominions) of the heavens and the earth." (Qur'an, Chapter 6, Verse 75)

The assured beliefs and the sound judgment of the prophets were similar. It had nothing to do with senses, rather, the stately achievement was the fruit of their hard work in the cause of God. God has proclaimed:

وَتَبَتَّلْ إِلَيْهِ تَبْتِيلًا

"And devote yourself to God devoutly (with utmost sincerest devotion)." (Qur'an, Chapter 73, Verse 8)

Indeed, when such be the case, He sets everything right. He alone is All Competent:

رَّبُّ ٱلْمَشْرِقِ وَٱلْمَغْرِبِ لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَٱتَّخِذْهُ وَكِيلًا

"Lord of the East and the West; there is no god but He, so take Him for the Caretaker [of all of your affairs]." (Qur'an, Chapter 73, Verse 9)

Therefore, when you depend upon Him and in Him only, then divest all [your] connections with everything other than Him and you will have nothing to worry about [as He is the best disposer of all of your affairs]:

وَٱصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَقُولُونَ وَٱهْجُرْهُمْ هَجْرًا جَمِيلًا

"And bear patiently what they say [in terms of lies, hurtful things, attacks, allegations, abuses and criticisms] and forsake them graciously." (Qur'an, Chapter 73, Verse 10)

Such preeminent virtue is displayed in the strenuous exercise of the steadfast in their indefatigable toil and hardiness to be perpetually dutiful to Him. It purifies human being's heart. One rises above all fears of enmity of the people and the luring snares of the worldly cares and cravings. To be the proud possessor of such knowledge, achieved after such hard work, is the enviable good fortune of the singularly blessed, the "*Wali*" or the friend and intimate of God. One is installed on a high pedestal. The status of the prophets of God is nevertheless higher to them for the obvious reasons.

Do not, however, be misled that the acquisition of such [a lofty spiritual] state applies only to God's Prophets. In fact, every person in one's own right is capable of it. For example, there is no iron, which, due to its own basic intrinsic character, may not be able to be molded into a polished mirror in which one may be able to see the face of anything in the world. That, it may later be tarnished and sullied is another matter. Naturally, the worldly greed and temptations do a lot of damage to it and deface the [polished] mirror [of the heart]. Evil is such a menace [that it covers and deforms the

polished mirror of the heart that no longer remains capable of reflecting the truth and the light of God].

Human being should not restrict oneself to a superficial understanding of reality and truth. [Instead,] One should realize that in one's vocation, in one's learning is the "*Ma'rifa*" or Gnosis of God. This is what [true] knowledge means. Nevertheless, the knowledge in itself is narrower and smaller than the heart. The heart is the rider of the body [and not the vice versa]. Heart's purpose is for the rider to ride its mount. The horse (i.e., body) is for the rider (i.e., the heart) and not the rider (i.e., the heart) for the horse (i.e., the body).

Understand that nothing is nearer to you than your own self, but you fail to do so. The person who does not know one's own self and claims to know other, is like that pauper who cannot feed oneself but professes to have the poor and the destitute of the city at one's dining table. Such a claim is absurd.

The purpose of this discourse is that one should realize how great and privileged one's heart is. God has bestowed this tremendous blessing on you but kept it hidden from you. If you do not explore it, [but instead,] waste it, remain negligent to it, it would be a matter of great loss and lament for you. It is, therefore, incumbent upon you to strive hard to acquire the truth - the virtue of this great Divine gift. Rather than losing its quest in the ordinary pursuits of this world, seek its culmination [and ultimate purpose] so that you may be regarded and respected in this world and in the Hereafter. That is, God may grant you such status and stability that there may not be any instability after it, that you may get such strength that there may not be any weakness after it, that you may be consecrated with such "*Ma'rifa*" or Gnosis that the proximity of Divine Beauty may be your enviable fate. You may be blessed with such bliss that there should be nothing to retard it. The veritable status that you may achieve as such depends on your performance and the capability you may be able to acquire to deserve it.

This is very essential. Otherwise, if you analyze matters, you will see that there is no greater misery than to be in the humility of heat, cold, hunger, thirst, sickness, and distress. The things one enjoys doing, may at times be harmful to one. Those things that one thinks may be beneficial to one, may be fraught with cares, stress and strain. Hence, one needs to tread with care.

A venerated person, we [all generally] know, is a person of honor due to one's knowledge, power, accomplishments, the strong will, the grit, and the good profile. At the same time, as far as a person's knowledge, learning or education is concerned, if we cast a meditative eye on it, we will find that one is the most ignorant of all, i.e., if even one vein in one's brain is distorted, there is a danger of one going mad or even that of one's death. One does not know its cause or treatment. Furthermore, the medicine for its treatment may be lying right before one's eyes but one may not be aware that this very medicine is the cure of one's malady. Regarding one's power, one is so helpless that sometimes one cannot even kill a fly. For that matter, if a lion is ordained by God to do so, one is killed by it. If a wasp stings, one becomes restless.

Similarly, one loses one's grip, becomes much worried and restless over it even if a small amount of silver is lost. So, does one lose one's balance, if one must go without a morsel of food for some time. Thus, who can be weaker than a human being? Speaking about one's handsomeness and beauty of one's general demeanor, it can be compared to the over-extension of a leather tent on a pile of mud. It's also a known fact that if a person does not take a bath for two days, one would start stinking; be avoided by people and be generally disgraced in public, in addition to several other complications that may set in. There is nothing dirtier than the human being, as dirty matter remains in one all the time, that one carries with oneself and washes it many times a day.

A parable has been quoted that once Shaikh Abu Saeed (May God be pleased with him), a highly respected saint and Gnostic, was going somewhere in the company of some *Sufis* (people who strive in the spiritual path for inner transformation to attain Divine proximity). They reached a place and saw that the people there were performing the job of cleaning the human excreta. The path was littered with stinking dirt. Everyone was taken aback at the sight of that, muffed their noses and ran aside here and there, but the *Shaikh* (spiritual guide) remained standing there and said, "Listen, O People! Do you know what this pile of filth is saying to me?" They enquired, "What?" He replied, "It is saying that till yesterday, I was in the market in the form of fruits and sweets, etc. People were spending money lavishly on me. I remained in their bellies overnight then I turned into this obnoxious smelling rot. Should I run away from you, or you from me?"

The fact is that human being is weak, imperfect, and helpless in this world. One would nevertheless be in full swing on the Day of Judgment. Under the circumstances, if one retains the "*Kimiya as-Sa'ada*" or "Alchemy or Transformative Agent of Eternal Happiness and Endless Triumph" with one, one will rise above the status of animals and reach the stature of the angels. But if one fell prey to the world and to the worldly desires, the dogs and swine will be better than one, because they would be dissipated [and gone forever] but human being would remain submerged in Divine retribution and sufferings due to one's own evil deeds one did in the worldly life. It means that if the human being has recognized the immensity and loftiness of one's status, one must simultaneously remember the harm and loss that is likely to accrue to one, if one fails to live up to it. To do such a stock-taking of things, is the key to the "*Ma'rifa*" or Gnosis of God. All this should be sufficient for one to recognize one's [own] self.

Knowing God

Ghazali continues his marvelous exposition of the alchemy (or transformative agent) of eternal happiness and true abiding success in his book "*Kimiya-e-Sa'adat*" or "Alchemy or Transformative Agent of Change for Eternal Happiness and Endless Success", by explaining the second of the four titles (or requirements)

of this alchemy (or transformative agent) of eternal bliss which is "knowing God". In explaining the second requirement for transformative agent of eternal bliss - "knowing God", he writes [3]:

Dear beloved! It is stated in the [Divine] Books ordained on the previous prophets [before Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)] that God has decreed:

اَعْرِفْ نَفْسَكَ تَعْرِفْ رَبَّكَ

"Recognize your own self, you will then know your Lord."

Also, this dictum is very well-known since the times and treatises of the Hadith (Prophetic narrations) and the companions of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him):

مَنْ عَرَفَ نَفْسَهُ فَقَدْ عَرَفَ رَبَّهُ

"One who has recognized one's own self, has recognized one's Lord."

The heart of human being is like a [polished] mirror [provided the dust settled on it has been removed and surface cleaned of anything that impedes its function as a polished mirror]. One who focuses one's sight and attention on it, will become cognizant of God. The point is, there are people who keep on admiring themselves futilely without looking into this mirror, hence they get nowhere near getting to know their Lord. Again, the answer lies in seeing this mirror of the heart which possesses the "*Ma'rifa*" (Gnosis) of God in its right consonance. Hence, to know the reality of the heart in the right perspective is necessary of the two conspicuous aspects of it. One is very difficult to understand because it is beyond the comprehension of the [ordinary] people. Therefore, it would be better to not broach it. The other aspect is, one should try to gain an understanding of Almighty God by one's own self, i.e., through the special characteristics dwelling in one to this effect. That is, one should try and delve into the study of that Supreme Lord's bounties and beauty of creations spread in the vast expanses of the entire universe, along with what He has kindly granted to the heart of the human being in the kingdom of one's body and in its organs. One must contemplate fully on one's origin to begin with, that one was a mere nonentity at first and that now one is a 'being'. It is proclaimed in the Holy Book (Qur'an):

هَلْ أَتَىٰ عَلَى ٱلْإِنسَٰنِ حِينٌ مِّنَ ٱلدَّهْرِ لَمْ يَكُن شَيْـًٔا مَّذْكُورًا ﴿١﴾

إِنَّا خَلَقْنَا ٱلْإِنسَٰنَ مِن نُّطْفَةٍ أَمْشَاجٍ نَّبْتَلِيهِ فَجَعَلْنَٰهُ سَمِيعًۢا بَصِيرًا ﴿٢﴾

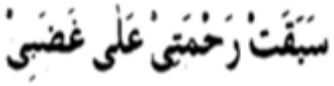
"Has there come on human being a time when one was not a thing to be [even] mentioned? We created human being from a mingled sperm-drop; then trying one, We made one hearing and seeing." (Qur'an, Chapter 76, Verses: 1-2)

One would realize from one's humble origin that one was a mere drop of impure water which did not even contain the qualities that were later endowed on one, such as those of intellect, hearing, seeing, taste, touch and speech. Nor did it contain the ears, eyes, tongue, hands and feet, head, veins, tissues, bones, or spine etc. In short, one's genetic being consisted of this whitish drop of water only, in its nascent form.

One's contemplations along those lines will further tell one that despite the human potential to ascend to such lofty heights, one did not come into being of one's own accord and of one's own evolution. One did not produce oneself. One was created by someone else. In one's own forte, one cannot even fabricate a single, solitary hair. One is utterly helpless. After all, one was in one's very essence, nothing but a drop of unclean water. So how can the quality of creating oneself be ascribed to one? It goes without saying that such an introspection will give one an enlightenment into the reality of one's being and of one's Creator. Leave aside the elegant splendors of His creations in the universe, when one will look into the superb organism of one's body, its various functions, each having its own peculiar quality and function, one would come to realize the magnificence and unparalleled adroitness of the Master Creator, the God Almighty.

One must thank the Lord for many things. God has also gifted one with a pre-eminent soul and a handsome body. One's beautiful profile alone should make one bow before Him in profound gratitude. One is thus fortunate to have been given both the "*Jamal*" or beauty and the "*Kamal*" or excellence and the bounty by none other than God alone. After all, what is one otherwise? Nothing but a handful of dust! God has created nothing without purpose. Every part of human anatomy is essential, has a special duty to perform in the manner prescribed. Each one of these components has been expertly produced, planned, and programmed [for specific functions peculiar to it]. Nothing is missing and wanting. So perfect is the entire constitution that it cannot be excelled in any way. For instance, look at the teeth in the jaw. The front ones are pointed and sharp to help one cut and pierce the edibles adequately. The others near them are rather wide, groovy, and flattened to enable one to grind them into fine digestible particles. The lower portion under the tongue moistens the morsel of food thus formed, making it more malleable for easy and safe passage through the throat. In the same way, human palm has five fingers. Four fingers are similar. But the thumb is placed at some distance from them. It is shorter and a little thicker than them. It has the faculty of coordinating and working together with each one of them and also of working together with all the fingers collectively, for good grasp and handling. In turn, each finger has three pores, but the thumb has two. The human being can move and twist these pores at will. By bending them single handedly, one can cup the palm. By uniting and twisting the pores of both the hands, one can use them as a hollow plate. Likewise, by closing these pores and the palm of the hand, one can convert it into a sort of boxing glove, to fight one's enemy. On the other hand, one can utilize it as a platter with straight palms. Any debate, therefore, about the position, size or the quantum of these fingers would be an exercise in futility. So superbly have they been made! The Supreme Architect of all these things and the universe is the best Judge. He knows all about everything He has evolved.

Human being's needs and wants are unlimited. The Creator's creations are also unlimited. Human being needs clothes to wear, a house to live in and scores of other things. The natural elements like the rain, air, heat, cold, and land to grow the food in, have likewise been produced for one. The essential metals like tin, iron, bronze, etc., have also similarly been provisioned to human being to assist one to make one's tools and implements for different purposes and industries. All these things and many others are there for one for the taking, to benefit from them, to lead a comfortable life. Should human being then not become curious enough to ultimately feel the presence of the Omnipotence of Him, who in His supreme kindness has done all this for one [even without one even realizing and asking for them]? Should human being's heart not be enriched with His love and in His worship? According to a *Hadith Qudsi* (a prophetic narration that has been attributed to God for its source), Prophet Muhammad (May the peace and blessings of God be upon him) has stated [that God said]:



"My Mercy has prevailed upon My Wrath."

According to Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him): "The mercy and kindness of God on humanity, is far more than that of a doting mother on her suckling baby."

On a comparatively lower scale, a simple but a good human being, sees the "*Ma'rifa*" or Gnosis of God in such things:

1. In one's own creation from the humble origin of a drop of water.
2. In the uncanny traits of the organs of one's body.
3. In the provisioning by God of all of one's wants and needs.
4. In the beauty of one's physical constitution. The aesthetic things created by God in one which give one an appealing and attractive appearance.

God likes such a person and blesses one with His "*Ma'rifa*" or Gnosis. Such an evaluation of one's own self, becomes a key to God's Gnosis ("*Ma'rifa*").

The Universe in You

Human being strives to understand the thing one does not know. One tries one's best to understand God by the internal and the external qualities one possesses. Whereas one's effort is laudable, the fact remains that human being's comprehension and capability is limited, no matter how exalted one's status may be. One's unabated research in this connection will no doubt enhance one's standing in life; the more and more refined one's heart and the "*Nafs*" (or self) become immersed in this process, by one's great love for Him, one will consequently attain relative nearness to Him but one will ultimately fathom the truth that "only God knows God in totality" and that He cannot be encompassed.

For example, the heart of human being, the "*Nafs*" or self, in reality, cannot be quantified. It has no dimensions. It is indivisible [and hence above the constraints of quantification, limit, and limitations of the dimensions of time and space]. It has no color. In short, it is above all such considerations. How can one, in such a case, determine the shape of such a thing? How can one visualize such a thing whose form or bearings are not known? Therefore, it does not tally with any quality in human being which may correspondingly discern it.

There are many things in human being which one feels but one cannot understand them. Love and pain, for example, can be felt but they cannot be seen or conjured up in mind nor do they have any shape, color, or size. The matter is rather complex. Different discernments and conditions felt by human being, pertain to different constituents of one's senses. For instance, we know that the voice is akin to the ear. The color is seen and appreciated by the eyes. The tongue recognizes the taste and the nose smells the odor. The redeeming common factor, the intellect may have something to do with it. A book of inductive logic may perhaps be pertinent to the issue to an extent, but surely not to the heart and its special endowment which is a subject in a different class altogether.

God is everywhere. But His presence cannot be circumscribed to a particular place, to the exclusion of the rest. His presence and command are felt everywhere. The soul cannot be felt singly in relationship to any organ of the body. It cannot be said that it is in the hands, in the feet, in the head, or in any other part of the body. These bodily organs are divisible as aforementioned, but heart and soul are not divisible. Logically, a thing that is indivisible, cannot be contained in anything that is divisible.

By saying, however, that the heart and soul bear no relationship to any organ of the body, it does not mean that it does not have an impact on them. As a matter of fact, all parts of the body are subservient to it and under the direct control of the heart, the soul, or the "*Nafs*" or the self of human being. The soul of human being is the king in this context in so much as the entire universe is under the direct control of God Almighty, the King of the universe and all existence.

The subject of soul is very delicate and subtle. Despite all deliberations and discourses on it, it is a unique and a well-guarded secret. Hence, it cannot be broached beyond a certain limit. For instance:

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ خَلَقَ اٰدَمَ عَلٰى صُوْرَتِه

"Verily God created Adam [and hence the entire humanity that emerged from him] on His own image".

This is where one has no other alternative but to say that God knows best.

We have hitherto determined that:

1. God is Omnipotent. The beneficence of His great Divine qualities of supreme excellence are manifest in Him.
2. He is Omnipresent but presence cannot be considered restricted to any one place to the exclusion of any other place or places.
3. Knowing the self is the key to His Gnosis or "*Ma'rifa*".
4. The real purpose and objective of human being is to attain His Gnosis or "*Ma'rifa*".

Now one would like to understand as to how. He is the Supreme Ruler, the Supreme King in the kingdom of human being. There are many enigmas to be unraveled:

1. His giving commands to the angels and their humble obedience.
2. His ordinations from the Heaven above and their supplicant compliance of earth below.
3. The continual motion of the stars and constellations.
4. The grant of the sustenance of His living creatures for their subsistence by Him (from the heavens above).

These are cogent questions pertinent to His Gnosis. These matters and the like come under the purview of what is called the kind "acts of His Beneficence".

In this thesis, we have determined many courses that lead to His Gnosis ("*Ma'rifa*"). Now we would like to know of the Gnosis of His Divine actions ("*Af'aal*"). In other words, unless you come to know of the way human being rules the kingdom of the body, you would not be able to understand how He, the Master of all masters, reigns Supreme over the entire universe. Hence again, we come to the inevitable conclusion that unless the human being gets to know one's 'self' and each act of one is guided in this perspective, one will not be able to resolve the mystery.

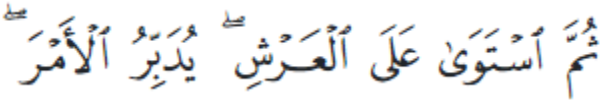
For example, when you intend to write down "*Bismillah*" (Arabic expression for "In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful") on a piece of paper, your heart desires to do so first, then the heart (i.e., the real heart and not the physical organ on the left side of the body also called the "heart") stirs to this effect and orders the brain to have it implemented. The first sensitive chamber of the brain which is the place of the human "*Khayal*", i.e., the conjuring up of the thought of it, does it. The concept of the thought is conceived. It is imparted by the brain to the muscles of the brain which spread and extend it to the body; the writing fingers get directed, the veins and their tissues receive the message to this effect, in turn they hold the pen and inscribe the words according to the stimuli received. The other sensory organs also aid and abet and "*Bismillah*" is written. Hence, it is possible to infer that the entire transaction took place on account of the basic 'will' to do so. In the same manner, in the inception or the beginning of everything, this 'will' or "*Irada*" is of the essence. When it is attributed to God, this 'will' is called the 'Paramount Will' of God.

In so much as human being's will first emanates in one's heart and there onwards it reaches other quarters [of the body], likewise the paramount Will of God and its

influence, first starts from the "*Arsh*", i.e., the Dominion of Divine Omnipotence, then it reaches other positions and people. Furthermore, the ingenious manner in which this concept of the will reaches human brain via the delicately fine fibers of one's heart, one's soul; likewise, this inviolable gem of God's Will, His "*Irada*" or 'Will' is conveyed by Him from the "*Arsh*" (or "Dominion of Divine Omnipotence") to the "*Kursi*", the "Heavenly seat of Supreme Divine Excellence". This gem par excellence is manifest in His Angel or "*Ruh al-Quds*" (the holy spirit). Same as the dominion of the brain is subservient to the heart of the human being, similarly, the impact of God's orders is conveyed to the "*Kursi*" through the subservient realm of His ordainment, for immediate obedience and compliance. The entire process described in the previous chapter, from its advent of the thought of writing "*Bismillah*" ("In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful") in the heart, its final execution, is likewise initiated by the "*Jauhar Talif*" or the "Uncanny Volition of God" in a majestic way, which actuates the stars and other constellations in the galaxy, assigning them their desired roles. Consequently, by their radiation (rays), based on their intrinsic potential, the atmosphere is stirred to create weather conditions like the heat, the cold, and the autumn season, etc.

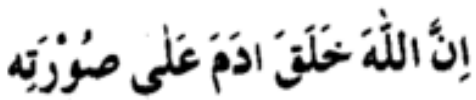
Also, as the pen sets the ink in motion to assimilate and foregather scattered words to give it the united form of "*Bismillah*", in the same way, the heat, cold, water and dust set their compounds in movement to gather valid forms constituted by their interaction to give matter their various shapes, the heat and dust to amalgamate them and the dryness to cohere them.

When the pen moves to write, whatever is conceived to be written, its vision is formulated, which ultimately takes shape in the words that are penned down. In the same way, when the inherent values of the above-mentioned compounds are set in motion, thereafter, through the agency of the angels, the forms of the animals and other vegetation are visualized in accordance with the transcript of the above referred to as "*Loh Mahfoodh*" (the Preserved Tablet that contains a complete record of all creations and existence and all happenings pertaining to them). In view of the loftiness of "*Arsh*" (simply "Throne" but in reality, it is the Dominion of Divine Omnipotence), the "*Loh Mahfoodh*" (the Preserved Tablet) and the "*Kursi*" (the Heavenly seat of Supreme Divine Excellence), many people think since times immemorial that God resides in heaven at "*Arsh*"! In the Chapter of [Prophet] Jonah (*Surah Younus*) in the Qur'an, it is stated:



"Then [God] established over the Throne, managing the Affair." (Qur'an, Chapter 10, Verse 3)

Talking of those endowed with "*Kashf*" or spiritual unveilings, one can say that their word has its value:



"Verily, God created Adam on His own image."

Beware then that as the saying is, "only a king knows the real worth of a king". If you yourself were not a king in your own domain and if God had not blessed you with a semblance of His mercy in you, you would never have gotten anywhere near to His Gnosis ("*Ma'rifa*"). Hence, thank that Almighty King who has created you and crowned you with the kingship of your realm.

Your "*Arsh*" (throne) is the animal soul ('animal soul' is separate from the 'human soul' which is the most superior part of human existence). Its source is in the heart. Your "*Israfil*" (the angel who will blow the trumpet on the Day of Judgment that will bring everyone back to life; soul when brought back to life, has the potential to rejuvenate, resurrect, and reinvigorate every aspect of human existence) has been made of it by God. Your "*Kursi*" (seat) has been constructed likewise of the thoughts. Eyes, ears, and sensory elements are like the angels. The brain is like a canopy. Its dome, which has been made of your perceptive constituents, is your sky. After clearing away all base concepts from your heart, it has been installed as the reigning king over all parts of your body. After having so much done for you, you were told to never even for a moment, neglect yourself or your kingdom. Otherwise, this neglect is tantamount to ignoring the orders of God that will result in serious jeopardy of your position before Him:

فَإِنَّ اللّٰهَ خَلَقَ آدَمَ عَلٰى صُوْرَتِه فَاعْرِفْ نَفْسَكَ يَا اِنْسَانُ تَعْرِفْ رَبَّكَ

"Then verily, God created Adam (the father of entire humanity and thus by extension, all human beings) in His own image. So, know yourself O human being! You will [then] know your Lord."

The concept of the kingdom of human being is derived in miniaturization from that of the Almighty's Kingship and Kingdom over the entire universe. In itself, this notion contains the emphasis on:

1. The knowledge of human being's own self regarding the learning of the vital qualities and vocations of the different organs of the body that constitutes one's kingdom.
2. The knowledge of the Gnosis of God, His Kingdom in regards to God's Beneficent attention towards His angels, in turn the angel's relationship, to each other and the exalted "*Arsh*" (the Divine Throne), the heavens and the "*Kursi*" (the Heavenly seat of Supreme Divine Excellence) which is also a facet of unique knowledge of great merit.

An astute person will never remain unmindful and careless of them, as against a negligent fool who will only reap the harvest of one's wanton ignorance. Some of the 'Naturalists' and 'Astrologers' are unfortunately so ill-attained to their reliance on their limited education of the subject that as such they tend to attribute the eventual effect, the result of everything, in the effect of the stars. Their belief is so dogmatic, so

pedestrian that in terms of this illusion, their state can be compared to that of an ant crawling on a piece of paper which may get the impression that the pen is creating a black trace on the surface [of paper], as it is going along listlessly. Another ant crawling on paper, having a higher vision, may extend the belief even further that the hand [holding the pen] is creating marks on the paper. This is the example of naturalists. The obvious fallacy of their [incorrect] belief lies, in their creed carried too far, that all human beings are irrevocably influenced by stars irrespective of all other facts. The antonym of fact is fancy or farce. Then astrologers easily forget that these stars too are in obedience to the angels, as ordained by God, the Supreme Master of heavens and the stars and of all that is in the universe and beyond. Their grasp is limited to the material things only. They are complete novices in the spiritual field which is superior to all physical worldly considerations. The stars of the physical (or material) realm have less brilliance than the resplendent light of the spiritual realm ("*'Alam Ruhani*"). They know not that the soul rules over the body. Its opposite is not true. They are proud of their know-how and knowledge but in their absurdity, they remain devoid of the blessings of the path of the spiritual realm of the soul where many a luminous stars of the inner being ("*Batin*"), mark a milestone in the course of God and the "*Meraj*" (spiritual ascension or the glory of the ascending heights to the path of God, as bestowed on Prophet Muhammad [Peace and blessings of God be upon him]). God has accordingly proclaimed in the Holy Book (Qur'an):

وَكَذَٰلِكَ نُرِىٓ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ مَلَكُوتَ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ

"And thus, We showed [Prophet] Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth." (Qur'an, Chapter 6, verse 75)

Prophet Abraham (Peace of God be upon him) exclaimed in reply:

إِنِّى وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِىَ لِلَّذِى فَطَرَ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضَ

"I turn my face (i.e., my whole being - both inner and outer) to Him who originated the heavens and the earth." (Qur'an, Chapter 6, Verse 79)

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) has also said:

إِنَّ لِلّٰهِ سَبْعِيْنَ اَلْفَ حِجَابٍ مِنْ نُوْرٍ لَوْ كَشَفَهَا لَاَحْرَقَتْ سُبْحَاتُ وَجْهِهٖ كُلَّ مَنْ اَدْرَكَ بَصَرُهٗ

"Verily, there are seventy thousand veils of pure light for God. If He had unveiled it, the rays of His Countenance would have burnt everyone who looked towards Him."

The people of the knowledge of medicine have, likewise, based much of their practice similarly on the hot or cold effect of things. It has assisted them to an extent in the practice of their profession. The redeeming quality of the Creator in making the sun bright and hot, the Saturn dry and cold and Mercury even more hot, is not without its purpose. The poor astrologer, in one's astronomical clairvoyance could, however, not

fathom the ingenuity of their Creator in positioning the sun nearest to the earth, or variations of the day and night or for that matter, the humble obedience in duty of all stars and constellations in the sky to His Supreme Will. Such a one has omitted to give credence to their spiritual virtue with respect to their physical existence and known properties. Only if one knew that all these stars in the hemisphere are subjugated and subservient to the Will and Command of God, one would then not have believed so much in their physical aspect blindly:

ٱلشَّمۡسُ وَٱلۡقَمَرُ بِحُسۡبَانٍ

"[At His behest] the sun and the moon run their appointed courses." (Qur'an, Chapter 55, Verse 5)

وَٱلشَّمۡسَ وَٱلۡقَمَرَ وَٱلنُّجُومَ مُسَخَّرَٰتِۭ بِأَمۡرِهِۦٓ

"And the sun, the moon and the stars are subjected to His command." (Qur'an, Chapter 7, Verse 54)

A thing is considered subjugated which is harnessed and put under control and made to work. Like the human organs do for a human being. Each one of them have been assigned a function to perform. The stars too are servants of God, fulfilling His commands. In the same manner, as the brain directs the other organs of the human body to act in conjunction with discerning faculties endowed by Him to the human being, the stars also remain occupied in their stipulated performance through the angels assigned by God to this effect, performing the role of their directors and prime movers. In fact, these angels are the living heralders of many a thing in their stipulated spheres.

The ostensible cause and its effect, i.e., the result, matters only so much. The unqualified coincidences are all there to make people believe in things to the extent that their position can be compared to the legendary blind men who groped an elephant in the dark part by part, and rather than thinking of the whole, gave each one of them a different name based on erroneous judgment. The same applies to this astrologer, the clairvoyant, who similarly fallaciously considers a slave a master, the king. This very thing is lucidly depicted in Holy Qur'an [through the words of Prophet Abraham (Peace of God be upon him)]:

لَآ أُحِبُّ ٱلۡأٓفِلِينَ

"I do not love those that set [as the sun does at sunset]." (Qur'an, Chapter 6, Verse 76)

The moon and the sun are conjectured to be God by the ignorant. The commanded are called the commanders until sanity prevails. There are twelve "*Burooj*", i.e., mounts in the celestial sphere. It can be compared to a lofty king sitting within his glorious chamber of grace with his "*Wazir*" (minister). Around him, in vantage ground are sitting the elite assistants of the "*Wazir*" (king's minister) in twelve distinguished heavens of peace, each having a door. Seven obedient but agile horsemen are hovering around each door at the beck and call of the assistants of the "*Wazir*" listening carefully to the summons received. For their immediate implementation, there are four men on foot

standing at some distance from these horsemen, ready with their bows attentively watching these horsemen, thus fulfilling the instructions received by roping a certain group of people in and producing them before the high command. Then they are either punished or rewarded.

Accordingly, the "*Arsh*" ("the Dominion of Divine Omnipotence") is the abode of distinction of the distinguished minister ("*Wazir*") in charge of affairs, i.e., the favorite angel in the high heaven. This is in contradistinction to the mounts in the hemisphere of the stars as envisaged by an astrologer. These clairvoyants assign different meanings to the different position of the pawns and the paraphernalia on the chess board of the sky in the same manner as a physician deciphers the different ailments by different symptoms:

ذَٰلِكَ مَبْلَغُهُم مِّنَ ٱلْعِلْمِ ۚ

"This is their total attainment of knowledge." (Qur'an, Chapter 53, Verse 30)

However, when God's mercy overtakes such a sick person, the above-mentioned attendants attend to one, as stated and one is saved. The path of a prophet is star-studded in the same fashion and the "*Wali*" (saint, Gnostic or intimate of God) too performs miracles, in one's cure.

اِنَّ الْبَلَاءَ مُوَكَّلٌ بِالْاَنْبِيَاءِ ثُمَّ الْاَوْلِيَاءِ ثُمَّ الْاَمْثَلُ فَا الْاَمْثَلُ

مَرِضْتُ فَلَمْ تَعُدْنِىْ

"Verily, Prophets are put through trials and tribulations, then the intimates of God ('*Wali*') then those who are their likes [but lower in ranks, all according to their spiritual ranks before God]. So, when I am indisposed, do not ask for my health." *(Hadith* or tradition of Prophet Muhammad [peace and blessings of God be upon him])

We also see some people who look very sick but are not sick. Actually, they are the people who have been reduced to such a state due to the love of God, Whom they adore so much that they look ill. Indeed, love is so self-consuming!

Now you should understand the meanings of the terms "*Subhan Allah*" (Glory be to God [who is above all imperfections and shortcomings]), "*Alhamdulillah*" (All praises be to God), "*La ilaha illallah (* لَآ إِلٰهَ إِلَّا اللّٰهُ *)*" (There is no god but God), and "*Allahu Akbar*" (God is Great [exalted above and beyond any comparison to any of the creations]) because they are inseparable conjuncts of the "*Ma'rifa*" or Gnosis of God.

In derivation, when you come to recognize your 'self' ("*Nafs*"), i.e., in the piety and virtue in you, you get to know the supreme piety and virtuousness par excellence of God and thereby understand "*SubhanAllah*" (Glory be to God). When you become cognizant of the Kingship of God by dint of being the king of your own domain and assimilate the truth of the grand Supremacy of God on the entire universe since everything is subservient to Him. Only then you can consider that you have come to understand the

meaning of "*Alhamdulillah*" (All praises be to God). Verily, all praises and thanksgivings are due to Him and Him alone.

Now last but not least, you have to understand what the meaning of "*Allahu Akbar*" is. It does not simply mean "God is Great". It means far more than that. It does not just mean that He is greater than others. He is the Greatest of all. Yet, no comparison can be drawn between Him and anyone else at all. He is above and beyond all comprehension. He is Infinitely Supreme. He surpasses and encompasses everything. He is Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent and the Most Beneficent! We come to know of Him and His many unique and splendid qualities and powers from His creative genius and His Holy Names. So great and unparalleled is He that we cannot possibly ever be able to describe Him or enumerate His Blessings.

The piety of God is not like the piety of human being. It just cannot be. It is we, who cannot find words, in the least, to describe His great attributes, and in doing so ascribe words or expressions to Him which are just not adequate since He is the Creator of all of His creations. So how can they be like Him? In the same way, God forgives us, when we draw a comparison between the kingdom of a human being over which one rules and the Kingdom of God over which His Reign is manifest, we do not mean that they are similar. It just shows how inapt we are, how helpless human being is and how Glorious is God! For instance, if a child asks us about the charm of ruling over a state and to make him or her understand, we reply that it is the same as you find in playing with your bat and ball, you can see how near or far we are from the truth. We have said so before and we reiterate that only God knows God in totality and no one else does. The best course to adopt for human being under the circumstances is to:

1. Get absorbed in search of His Gnosis ("*Ma'rifa*") to the best of one's capability.
2. To concentrate on His Beneficence and to look for His Light ("*Noor*"), His Beauty ("*Jamal*"), His Power ("*Qudrah*") in His Divine qualities and creations.
3. To be thankful to Him for His kindness.
4. To worship Him with every fiber of one's heart and soul.
5. To obey His commandments.

We have all come from Him and to Him shall we return.

إِلَيْهِ الْمَرْجِعُ وَ الْمَصِيْرُ

"To Him is our return and the last resort."

The more you love Him, revere him, worship Him, the more you will be blessed [by Him]. He likes those who are sincere, devoted, humble, loving, and grateful. Such noble conduct is sure to be rewarded [by Him].

اَنَا بُدَّكَ اللَّازِمُ فَالْزِمْ بُدَّكَ

"I am (i.e., God) your necessary inevitability so hold on firmly to your inevitability."

His remembrance ("*Dhikr*") from the core of the heart can, only be fortified by detaching all [base] desires from one's soul, giving up [all] vile deeds and by getting fully submerged in His worship. A sincere heart is peaceful and clean. The grandeur of a believer ("*Momin*") lies in it:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ ٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ

"The believers have succeeded [with real, ultimate, abiding, and eternal success]." (Qur'an, Chapter 23, Verse 1)

God has also specified that:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَن تَزَكَّىٰ ﴿١٤﴾ وَذَكَرَ ٱسْمَ رَبِّهِۦ فَصَلَّىٰ ﴿١٥﴾

"Surely successful is the one who purifies oneself [i.e., purifies the soul] and remembers the Name of one's Lord and prays [to Him with sincere devotion]." (Qur'an, Chapter 87, Verses 14-15)

Knowing the World

Al-Ghazali continues his marvelous exposition of the alchemy (or transformative agent) of eternal happiness and true abiding success in his book "*Kimiya-e-Sa'adat*" or "Alchemy or Transformative Agent of Change for Eternal Happiness and Endless Success", by explaining the third of the four titles (or requirements) of this alchemy (or transformative agent) of eternal bliss which is "to know the world and reality of worldly life". In explaining the third requirement for transformative agent of eternal bliss - "to know the world and reality of worldly life", he writes [4]:

Dear beloved! This world is a path on which human being travels on one's journey onwards to the next [world]. It is an oasis at the end and foothold of a vast desert of the "*Ma'rifa*" or Gnosis [of God]. This world ("*Dunya*") and the next world ("*Akhirah*") or the Hereafter are two conditions. One state pertains to the human being's life and times [which is very near to one] till before one's death. The Hereafter starts [immediately] after one's death. This world [and worldly life] is for human being to prepare for the Hereafter ("*Akhirah*"). The purpose of this life is to collect a treasure of good deeds as one's earnings for one's sojourn here which will stand one in good stead in the Hereafter. Although human being has been created rather weak and incomplete in one's genesis, one has been simultaneously blessed with such genius (unique capability) that by following the injunctions of God, one may be in a position to achieve the "*Kamal*" or perfection and excellence, acquire angelic qualities and see the Glories of God. This is the sum total of one's existence. This is the promised 'Paradise'.

The key to His Gnosis ("*Ma'rifa*") lies in human being's gratitude for His great kindness towards one and in the appreciation of His innumerable bounties and in the cognizance of picturesque beauty of His creations. Human being's senses of perception make one taste and relish the ravishing things produced by Him, see the unique splendor of immense beauty, spread all around one in nature. One's ears make one appreciate soothing sounds and music [of the nature], one's hands make one feel the warmth of loving touch, etc. As long as human being is alive, one can enjoy all this and be grateful [to God for His immense bounties granted to one even without asking]. When one dies, one loses the freely rendered services of these intelligence [gathering] agents (i.e., the senses) which remain no more. Therefore, human being needs two things in life:

1. To protect one's heart from those things that kill one's heart. One should provide one's heart its food [and nourishment].
2. To protect one's body from the damaging effects of those things that [harm and] kill it. One should likewise provide it with its food.

In our discourse earlier, we have established that the food of the heart is the love and the Gnosis of God ("*Ma'rifa*") which is based on the dictum that the food of each thing is what it really likes and yearns to have based on its internal, natural characteristics to this effect. It must also be nourishing and sustaining. For that matter, even the body's care is also for the sake of the heart. For the body will ultimately perish but the heart will live [even after death forever]. A simple example can be given in this regard, as to say, the body is for the heart, as a camel (as the means of transportation in old times) is for the "*Haji*" or pilgrim [who performs *Hajj* or pilgrimage to the Sacred House of God, i.e., the symbol of God's Mercy on earth] in the path of God. One rides it and reaches "*Ka'ba*" (the Sacred House of God in Makkah). The reverse of it is not true, i.e., the pilgrim is not for the camel, but the camel is for the pilgrim. Naturally, the pilgrim will feed the camel till it reaches the "*Ka'ba*" [which is the goal and intended destination of the pilgrim]. Any let up or delay, any neglect on one's part on this account will be damaging to one's objective [of reaching one's intended destination].

Analyzing the matter further, the human body requires three things:

a) Food
b) Clothes
c) House.

In other words, eating requires food, the need to cover oneself requires clothes, house is the place of sanctuary where one may remain sheltered from the onslaught of heat and cold so that the body remains protected from harms. In short, these three things are the basis, the elementary pre-requisites of the body, i.e., of one's physical existence. However, if the human being overeats, one may die. The desire of the house and clothes has also been implanted in human being for one's subsistence. The excessive demand of this nature may be harmful. Here the rationale, the commonsense comes to one's rescue and prevents one from over-indulgence in these demands of the body. The principle of goodness in which all moral values are included

or from which they are derived, highest or supreme good that supervenes them, is the heart. Its food is noble. The more food the heart gets, the better it is for the soul. With the result that a heart nourishes well, with the love and the quest of God, finds its niche and rides the body like a knight rider who has the reins of its mount in one's hand. Hence, pay heed my friend and do not let its reins get loose. When you are fully in control of the body's lusts, the greed, the malfeasance, the unholy and misleading urges will be curbed.

The world comprises of three principal categories of things namely:

1) Those things that are found on earth like vegetation of all kinds, mines, and animals, etc. The land's surface in itself forms the basis of human residence, agriculture, etc.

2) The minerals like iron, steel, bronze, etc. are used for making implements, tools and other apparatus required by human being for various purposes.

3) Human being rides the animals and eats their flesh and maintains one's existence by eating other articles of food.

There are many other complexities. It is pity that in one's daily routine, one keeps one's hands and feet and above all, one's heart busy in them, as the total preoccupation of one's heart as such can be very harmful indeed. It can lead to the heart's demise due to forgetfulness of its true purpose and in its involvement in worldly greed, backbiting, anger, and similar evil pursuits.

Likewise, three professions - those of goldsmith (for metals), weaving and that of architecture are also of paramount importance. These vocations are not only interrelated with each other in some form or the other but are also actively associated with their subsidiary trades. Like the cotton pickers pick the cotton flowers from cotton plantations. Casters sift the fluff; cotton spinners spin them into threads and ultimately cotton weavers loom and weave them into different kinds of fabrics. These clothes are then stitched and tailored. The ironsmith makes tools with which the tailoring, stitching, and sewing is performed. In this manner, people of different vocations work with each other.

Each is dependent on the other. Naturally, complications and professional jealousies set in. The tailor virtually becomes reliant on the weaver for the woven material and on the spinner, who spins it with one's mechanical devices fabricated in turn by a carpenter or an ironsmith, while one oneself also requires one's own tools and apparatus to tailor, for which again the ironsmith's services are required. This complex system of give and take, results in complications and rivalries, for which three principal things along with other factors which bear on the issue, are vital:

1) Political, in other words, tactical acumen and statesmanship.
2) The monitoring gear and the government.

3) "*Ilm al-Fiqh*" or the knowledge of law and the code of conduct as per the laid down rules and regulations in religion.

In final analysis, this infrastructure is for the realization and the accomplishment of the aforementioned three human pre-requisites, namely food, clothing and house or the place of residence. The rest follow them. These basic human requirements pertain to the body. The body in turn is for the heart, the soul. The soul has to mount the body like the pilgrim ("*Haji*") has to ride the camel to reach the *Ka'aba* (pilgrim's ultimate destination - the symbolic House of God in Makkah which is the symbol of God's Mercy on earth). In human being's case, one's goal is synonymous to it, i.e., to achieve the target of the "*Ma'rifa*" or Gnosis of God. Instead of keeping one's goal of reaching the [ultimate destination of] *Ka'aba* in mind, if the aforementioned pilgrim wastes one's time while travelling, on tending to and taking care of the camel all along, one has only oneself to blame for one's gross negligence [that will prevent one from reaching one's ultimate goal and destination]. Dear beloved! Learn a lesson from it. Do not get involved in worldly affairs at the cost of the real aim and purpose of life. The time wasted in the world in idle occupations of life [and useless pursuits] will cost you dearly. Remember that this journey of life is actually a journey towards the Hereafter ("*Akhirah*"). The charisma of this world is very alluring. Do not be taken in. Rise above the temptations of life. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) has rightly stated that, "The world is a greater sorcerer than '*Haroot* and *Maroot*' (the famous legendary sorcerers)". The reality [of the world] can be summed up as follows:

1. The first spell of magic cast by this world on you is that it makes you feel that this world and all its fascinations are there to stay all the time, whereas in fact, the reverse is the case. The time is fleeting, marching onwards continuously, though rather languidly, as you lose count of time in its happy moments. The passing time, its tread in the world is like a shadow. It always looks dormant like a shadow that looks still. You come to realize later that the shadow is no more where it was, instead it has shifted and moved away slowly and imperceptibly from its original position. Indeed, the world is in motion. Time and tide wait for none. Hence beware and do not let grass grow under your feet. A moment gained is not lost but a moment lost is never gained. As it is, life is short. So why not make the most of it.
2. The second instance of the magic of this world is that it treats you as a cherished friend on whom it pretends to lavish its gifts of worldly love and bonhomie, as if like a faithful comrade it will always remain with you. It tries to enamor you by every enticing guile at its command into making you bank on it, that you are the only most adored object of its attention. But later when it leaves you in lurch, you are jilted and lost. You get a shock of your life. What happens is that like a beautiful lover of wayward nature, it leaves you suddenly, weaves its silken fetters on someone else, takes such easy preys to its perilous parlor and makes one taste death and desolation.

   It is stated that once Jesus (*Isa* [Peace and blessings of God be upon him] or Jesus Christ), saw such an oft-married woman (which was an embodiment of the

reality of the world) in the state of "*Kashf*" (spiritual state in which realities from the spiritual realm are shown in the state of wakefulness) and asked her how many husbands had she wedded? She replied that she had lost count. Jesus enquired of her again, "Did they die, or you obtained divorce from them?" She replied back with the answer that she had killed them all! Jesus could not help but remark, on hearing this woeful reply, "Pity be on the people who fell into your spell. They saw what had happened to their predecessors, yet they walked into your spell of beauty, to death and did not learn a lesson in time".

3. The third example in this context is that of an old woman who covers her face with an appealing veil, decks herself with gorgeous garments, decorate her profile in flamboyant fashion and puts on rare invaluable jewelry so that whoever casts an eye on her, may fall in love with her straight away. This is how the world behaves with human beings. It tries to cast such a spell on one with its charming beauty and raptures that one may get out of one's wits and gets stupefied by its armors. It casts asunder all thoughts and considerations of its arduousness. Human being forgets that life is hard and earnest. Sometimes one realizes it too late when it becomes a rude shock to one when the old lady masquerading as a femme fatale, removes her veil and one sees a hideous face instead.
4. The fourth example is that if someone were to try and calculate the period of time that has elapsed since the evolution of universe, the period when this universe was non-existent and the time period that is left from now on to its end, one will find that doing so is impossible and even to think of doing so is crossing the bounds of sanity. Simply, all that one knows is that one's world is "from the cradle to the grave", i.e., the cradle is the beginning of one's journey through life, through this world and the grave is its end. There are a few stops in between, one can say, comprising the years, the months, the days and finally the breaths one takes. Some cover a long distance and some small. Whether human being's [life in] world is long or small, one's life span is [in reality] short but one forgets this important point completely. One lives here as if one is going to live forever. How ironical that although one is not sure even of one's next breath, one plans for things for the next ten years to come so that one may not feel their want or fall short of them. One may not even live to see that day!
5. Over-indulgence in the pleasures of life is as damaging for the Hereafter ("*Akhirah*") of human being as overeating is for a greedy glutton. A glutton pounces on rich, sweet, or hot, spicy, greasy food and devours it licentiously, not caring about the consequences of burdening one's stomach with such heavy and non-needed food. With the result that one starts vomiting and having loose motions. For momentary taste and pleasure, one's excessiveness puts one to such indignity, suffering and shame. Even the excrement after such a heavy course of meal, is sickening and obnoxious. It has therefore been observed that the more one indulges in the lust and licentiousness in this world, the more one is degraded in the Hereafter. At the final hour in the last spasms of one's breath, the more the human being measures money, gold, silver, garden, servants and maids in one's home, the more severe will be one's pangs of separation from them. On the contrary, a poor person will have no regrets. Such pangs of pain

only add to one's already deteriorating condition culminating in "'*Adhab*" or [Divine] retribution of one's evil deeds.

6. Another extraordinary factor of life is that the affairs of this world have an imminence about them. They look like normal chores, routine and not difficult. Oblivious of all other concepts and considerations, human being becomes totally absorbed in them. One does not realize that there are wheels within wheels and wheels therein. One thing leads to another, resulting in one's wasted life. Jesus (*Isa* or Jesus Chris [Peace and blessings of God be upon him]), has said that the seeker of this world is like that man who has his lips attached to the shore of the sea, eagerly absorbed in unabatedly quenching his thirst from it. His thirst seems to increase. The more he drinks, the more he desires to do so. Ultimately, he dies in this useless pursuit, remaining thirsty and unsatisfied. Such is the curse of the lust [for this world and its possessions]. Prophet Muhammed (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) has remarked about such a person, "It is not possible that one may be immersed in water and not get wet". Such a person of this kind, who has such a pronounced craze for this world, will definitely be sullied by it.
7. The seventh example about this world is like that of a guest who goes to a host who is very wealthy and is in the habit of lavishly treating one's guests who came to one in large numbers due to the [excellent] quality of the reception. One serves them with sumptuous food in gold and silver platters of exquisite design and decor in the aromatic atmosphere of ebony and amber afire in silver stove. A sensible guest who happens to understand one's nature, partakes of it gratefully, adds a little perfume of one's own to it and takes one's leave of the host gracefully, to their mutual satisfaction. On the other hand, a greedy guest tries to rob one's worthy host of valuable belongings after one's hospitality, and in the process gets nabbed and disgraced by the host's servants. The human lust and its depraved desires are lecherous. In this journey through this world, one's own rightfully acquired possessions are one's own true belongings which one can carry with one as one's baggage. In this guest house (or hotel in modern times), one can only benefit from the legal and the veritable. Avarice will do one no good.
8. The next example of the world, i.e., of its engaging nature is such that human being gets lost in it [in a state of fascination]. So much so that one forgets the Hereafter completely. For instance, a group of people on board a ship. They reach an island on their way where they step out for a while for a short respite, personal hygiene and to make ablutions. The captain announces that the ship must depart soon, hence they should attend to all their needs quickly and re-embark the ship quickly. The sensible of them do so expeditiously, whereas the other group of the indolent, scatter here and there, go out of sight, touring the island unnecessarily, enjoying the scenic beauty of the place, its flora and fauna and colorful seashells. When they return, they find that the comfortable places on the vessel have all been taken. Therefore, they have to sit in dark and dingy nooks. The next group of people who come after them, bring a heavy load of these conches with them. They get worse places than their predecessors due to their similar wasteful excursions. They get so confounded that they hardly find

any place to sit on board. In addition, they have to carry the load of these beautiful shells tied around their necks. After two days, these shells turn dirty and start stinking. What's worse is that for want of space, they cannot even dispel this burden. Equally heavy is their shame and repentance. The last group of idlers get so engrossed in exploring the island that in their vagaries, they completely fail to take notice of captain's call for quick assembly, miss their ship and die in wilderness.

In a nutshell, the first group of them is like that of the believers and last of them that of the unbelievers who are like those people who have forgotten God, His Holy Prophet (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) and the Day of Judgment:

استحبوا الحياة الدنيا على الآخرة

"They have preferred the love of this world over the Hereafter."

The intermediary two groups are the sinners who erred against their better judgment and prescribed course of behavior. They suffer in this world and in the Hereafter. They get subjected to Divine retribution for their misdeeds.

Beware that this is not the condemnation of the world as such. After all, the world has been created by God, hence it cannot be without purpose. All things in this world are not bad. For instance, the "'*Ilm*" or knowledge in itself and the "'*Amal*" (performance of actions as per prescribed conduct) are two virtues of significance in their own right. So much so, that both of them are ostensibly in this world, but will actually accompany human being to the Hereafter. For example, the knowledge of the "*Ma'rifa*" or Gnosis of God and its attainment is the culmination of human being's existence. The "'*Amal*" or one's actions and good deeds have their own positive lasting effect, namely, the consequent purity and piety of the soul which comes from discarding of the evil and the nourishment of the soul by devoted worship of God. The constant perpetual remembrance of God is the everlasting reward of the human being:

وَٱلْبَٰقِيَٰتُ ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتُ خَيْرٌ عِندَ رَبِّكَ

"But the lasting deeds of righteousness are better in reward with your Lord." (Qur'an, Chapter 18, Verse 46)

The lusciousness, the delight of the "*Dhikr*", i.e., the remembrance of God, is exquisite. We worship Him and enjoy its enchantment in this world but actually it does not pertain to it. It is the blessing of the Hereafter. There is also a joy of this world that ends as soon as the human being dies. But the delight of His love and worship lives forever. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) has said:

الدنيا ملعونة وملعون مافيها الاذكر الله وما والاه

"The world and the worldly assets are anathematic. But those things that aid and assist a person in remembering God are blessed."

This treatise on the world and its many traits is sufficient for the purpose of the present discourse. Its corollaries and other related matters will, God-willing, be discussed in due course.

Knowing the Afterlife

Al-Ghazali continues his marvelous exposition of the alchemy (or transformative agent) of eternal happiness and true abiding success in his book "*Kimiya-e-Sa'adat*" or "Alchemy or Transformative Agent of Change for Eternal Happiness and Endless Success", by explaining the last of the four titles (or requirements) of this alchemy (or transformative agent) of eternal bliss which is "to know the reality of the afterlife". In explaining the fourth requirement for transformative agent of eternal bliss - "to know the reality of the afterlife", he writes [5]:

Dear beloved! Remember that unless you come to know the reality of death, you will not be able to understand what the Hereafter means. The actuality of death, in turn, has a direct reference and bearing on life. The veracity of life lies in trying to comprehend the significance of the soul ("*Ruh*") which, in other words, is tantamount to the knowledge of the self ("*Nafs*"). To all intents and purposes, the soul and the self are synonymous. We have, by now, already arrived at the conclusion that human being has been created in the form of a physical frame with its complete infrastructure and with the soul ("*Ruh*"). It is worthwhile to reiterate that the soul is the rider and the body is the mount that it rides.

The soul will be in Paradise or in Hell according to its form, the worth, irrespective of the body. It will either be consecrated or condemned. The heart's invaluable assets, imbued by the Divine favor on the human being, without the body, are called "paradise of the soul". God's blessed person with such a soul, will be rewarded in the Hereafter with beautiful palaces, gardens, and innumerable other delights [that no eyes have ever seen, and no hearts have ever imagined as per Qur'anic and Prophetic teachings]. In antithesis to it, the soul in throes of agony and sufferings, owing to its own ill-deeds without the body, is termed as the "fire in the soul". Its abode will be Hell. Thorny hedges and scorpions will be one's companions [there]. Greater details on the subject have been provided in this work's companion volume [in my book called] "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God". Not many people know much about the death on which we have touched here; people prefer to dwell more on the heaven and the hell rather than on the subject of death. It has been stated in "*Hadith*

Qudsi" (traditions of Prophet Muhammad [Peace and blessings of God be upon him] in which he transmitted from God) that:

اعدت لعبادی الصالحین ما لا عین رأت ولا اذن سمعت

ولا شکر علی قلب بشر

"For My righteous servants, I have prepared [such joys] that have not been seen by any eye, nor heard by any ear, nor even occurred in the heart of any human being."

Furthermore, there is a window in human being's heart that is open towards the celestial (or spiritual) realm through which it sees the mysteries of the unseen ("*Ghaib*"). It does not come to know them by hearsay, but it actually views them and sees the state of the blessedness in the Hereafter or that of being condemned in the Hereafter. It discerns vividly, the pronounced difference between the two conditions of being healthy or ill as a physician would do. It becomes fully alive to the virtue of taking proper medicine in illness and in that of following the preventions stipulated by the doctor, by desisting from things He has forbidden. This process is called the blessedness of the body ("*Sa'adah badania*"). Vice versa, the overindulgence, like over-eating and paying no heed to his doctor is bad and is called the illness of the body ("*Shaqawatu badania*"). The practical observation makes one behold clearly that the heart, the soul of the offspring of Adam, i.e., human being, has both, the virtue and vileness in it. The 'cure' to get the reward of virtuousness lies in the worship and the Gnosis ("*Ma'rifa*") of God, while the curse, the venom of the vileness is contained in the stupidity of ignorance and in ignoble conduct [as noble ends can only be achieved through noble means and ignoble ends are the only outcome of ignoble means]. To acquire this knowledge, is to acquire great wisdom. Many of the people who have called themselves "'*Ulema*" or scholars, are not only not learned in this knowledge but are also its opponents and deniers. Surely knowing a thing makes one leaned ("*'Alim*") and an ignoramus for not knowing it. Yet, there they are. They know of physical paradise or hell only. To them, Hereafter is confined to the hearsay or in following the 'oft-followed' blindly. Needless to add that we have penned down the facts in study and research of the subject based on sound arguments, in Arabic.

We can, under the circumstances, only add that an intelligent and astute person whose inward ("*Batin*") or the soul is pure and unprejudiced, will find the righteous path leading to the judgment of the Hereafter in its nascent truth, unlike quite a few people, who are completely in the dark about it.

To understand the truth about death, you must know that human being has two kinds of souls. The "*Ruh Haiwani*" means the physical, the animal soul. The other is called "*Ruh Insani*" which is the soul from the origins of the soul of angels in human being. The source, the delta, the fountain of the animal soul is that lump of flesh called the [physical] 'heart' which is placed on the upper left side of human being. It has following distinct features:

1. It consists of delicately naive febricity of physical conjugation of moderate nature.
2. The febricity or light feverishness which in its own genesis is rather moderate, emanates from the veins of the [physical] heart, reaches the brain and the other parts of the body.
3. It is pulsating.

In a nutshell, this is the animal soul which is carrying and conducting the onus of the medium and movement. When it reaches the brain, its warmth is reduced and becomes clement. The eyes can see through it and the ears hear. It gradually extends to all senses. The soul can be compared to a lamp. When it reaches the house, the walls around where it is placed are lit up. In the same manner, as this lamp enlightens the surroundings, the parts around it in a house, God in His Supreme Mercy confers light, the power to see in the eyes and the capability to hear in the ears by this soul and all sensory organs are capacitated (enabled).

On the other hand, if some vein gets affected and becomes twisted or knotted, it is apt to get paralyzed, listless, and dormant and the physician tries one's best to see that this knot opens up and is removed somehow. In other words, the soul is like the flame of the lamp, the heart is the wick and food is the oil. Without the oil, the lamp is dowsed. Without food, i.e., the oil, the moderate temperament of the soul comes to a standstill thus resulting in death. If oil is there but the wick is using much oil, it means that it has become defective and the stage may be reached when it may not work at all. This is what finally happens to the heart - it becomes incapable to accept and assimilate its food. Likewise, if lamp is covered, it will get extinguished despite the presence of wick and oil. Similarly, an animal dies when it is seriously wounded.

Let us look at the example of the polished mirror. As long as it remains neat and clean, it accepts whatever is projected to it and mirrors it very satisfactorily. However, it cannot do so when it becomes dirty, tarnished, or covered with dust. The pictures and appearance of things do not become visible in it, not because they are not there, but because the mirror has become too soiled and hence incapable to reflect images.

Likewise, the capability of the medium to enable it to stir and of the sensibilities of the limbs in the animal soul, is on the account of its inherent natural temperament of moderation and also owing to its fine delicately naive febricity. But as soon as this trait of the clement nature, its temperance is lost, its forces that work as prime movers, cease to operate. Thus, this unique blessing of God is forfeited. The bodily organs stop functioning and human being is declared dead. The job of the angel, assigned by Almighty God, known to us as "*Malik ul-Maut*" or the "Angel of Death", starts. The cognizance of such matters is best known to him. We know him by hearsay as "*Malik ul-Maut*" or the "Angel of Death" but his real integrity is in the knowledge of but a few.

The question of human being's death is, however, different. In addition to the animal soul described above, human being has another soul ("*Ruh*") in one which is called "*Ruh Insani*" or the "human soul" or "heart". This soul, unlike the aforementioned

physical or organic soul, is on a much higher plane. Human soul does not accept division. Its importance and significance can be visualized by the fact that it can contain the "*Ma'rifa*" or Gnosis of God. Verily, God is also one and only. The division of His "*Ma'rifa*" or Gnosis, is also not tenable. Hence the concept of His "*Ma'rifa*" or Gnosis to be circumscribed in any bodily form, is tantamount to blasphemy.

Dear beloved! If for the sake of argument, we were to pre-suppose the presence of the wick, its flame and the light in human being, then we would only be able to ascribe the physical components of the lamp, namely, its structure and the wick to the animal form, then too we will not be able to connote its light to it as such, in conformity with the 'human soul' of the human being. It is obvious, because its former is transient, but the latter is not, i.e., the physical lamp's light is subject to the lamp. If the lamp is shattered, its light will be extinguished. But human being's real soul (i.e., the 'human soul') is never extinguished or obviated, although, one's 'animal soul' may perish. In a way, the animal soul in human being is the mount of one's real soul on which it saddles and gallops. It is also, the wherewithal, the apparatus for one to do so, to one's benefit. Therefore, when this mount (i.e., the animal soul) perishes, human being loses its usage. Just as well, as in its absence, one gains more confidence and becomes more independent and self-reliant. It matters the least to one, especially during this period, as human being has worked so hard that one has already achieved some merit of reckoning and position of the noteworthy. To put a stamp of authority on this glory, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) has also said that, "Death is a gift for a believer".

The situation is similar to that of a hunter who is in the field with one's hunting gear and paraphernalia. For the sake of argument, if one succeeds in getting the prey for which one has specifically came all the way but loses one's gear [in that process], one is still better off. Alternatively, if one loses one's hunting gear before one gets the prey, one's condition would become worse to one's chagrin [due to one's failure to achieve one's purpose]. There is a profound lesson in it for the same. Such a person meets one's own failure at one's own hands. The retribution of the Hereafter overtakes one, resulting in innumerable agonies.

One may be paralyzed in certain limbs. One's hands and feet may stop working. One should remember that one has just lost use of these instruments. What can't be cured must be endured. Hence, as long as the human being, the master agent, is there alive, the importance of these organs is secondary. One's truth, the reality is therefore not in them, not in the back, stomach or in the head. For that matter, even if all the organs of one's frame, one's body cease to work, desist from being one's servants and do not remain in one's control, yet one's immanence is possible, as the animal soul is not the same as the human soul. There are, however, two aspects to it which need to be re-emphasized namely:

1. In one type of existence [called life], the active participation of the body is essential. The hunger, thirst, sleep, etc. are the phenomena that do not take place or function without the physical form but die when the human being dies.

2. In the other existence [with only the 'human soul' or "*Ruh Insani*"], there is no existence of the body. This existence is the grand prix of God's Gnosis ("*Ma'rifa*") of the pursuit of the Divine Beauty ("*Jamal Ilahi*"), His superb splendor and glory par excellence; beautiful, bewildering and so delightfully ravishing, that bliss stands stupefied in its supreme ecstasy. These are the everlasting blessings ("*Baqiyat us-Salihaat*") of which God makes mention in the Holy Book (Qur'an). These 'eternal blessings of the blessed, the ratified good' are unparalleled reward of God, for which the human soul should remain ever gratified. God's elite, the chosen have this quality to the foremost in their self ("*Nafs*") which automatically raises them to an ever-ascending high pedestal. Vice versa, the neglect, the ignorance and the foolishness are the other side of it which is tantamount to being blighted and the blindness of the soul:

وَمَن كَانَ فِي هَٰذِهِۦٓ أَعۡمَىٰ فَهُوَ فِي ٱلۡأٓخِرَةِ أَعۡمَىٰ وَأَضَلُّ سَبِيلٗا ٧٢

"And whoso is blind in this [world], shall be blind in the Hereafter and further astray from the way [of truth]." (Qur'an, Chapter 17, Verse 72)

Unless, you tend to make out the difference between these two kinds of souls in human being, you will not be able to understand death.

The animal soul is in the order of the physical course, the crude being primarily concerned with rather vaporous genetics, as described earlier. Bile, fibrosis, and other excreta conjoin to form its compound. Their base elements are water, fire, dust, and air. Hence the resultant uniformity or variation marked by their interaction is attributed to the relevant heat, cold, moisture and dryness. The medical knowledge or its practitioner - the doctor - consequently remains fully alive to their significance.

They, however, do not know that in treating the body of their patients, they are involuntarily trying to make the physical frame of the body fit to be ridden over by the 'human soul', the real soul of human being. Angelic in nature, the "*Nafs al-Mutmainna*" or the refined soul of human being that has reached the level of inner peace and complete satisfaction, has grand characteristics. Human being's journey through life is not of one's own volition. One is ordained to do so, to show one's true worth of this path of pitfalls and make it with flying colors to the goal post and get one's reward of the hard work and tribulations, gallantly faced in this arduous passage [of worldly life] by one. God says:

قُلۡنَا ٱهۡبِطُواْ مِنۡهَا جَمِيعٗاۖ فَإِمَّا يَأۡتِيَنَّكُم مِّنِّي هُدٗى فَمَن تَبِعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا خَوۡفٌ عَلَيۡهِمۡ وَلَا هُمۡ يَحۡزَنُونَ ٣٨

"We said: 'Get you all down from here [i.e., from Paradise in God's Presence; this was addressed to Adam and Eve] together; there shall come to you guidance from Me then whosoever follows My guidance, no fear shall be on them, nor shall they grieve.'" (Qur'an, Chapter 2, Verse 28)

God, the Merciful, has also added:

إِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَٰٓئِكَةِ إِنِّي خَٰلِقٌۢ بَشَرًا مِّن طِينٍ ﴿٧١﴾
فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُۥ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِن رُّوحِي فَقَعُوا۟ لَهُۥ سَٰجِدِينَ ﴿٧٢﴾

"God told the angels, 'I am going to create human being from clay so when I have fashioned the human being and breathed into one, the soul created by Me...'" (Qur'an, Chapter 38, Verses 71-72)

In this verse, there is a subtle reference to the difference between these two souls ("*Ruh*"). One has been attributed to the dust and the word there has been used to impart the meaning of its temperance in nature, whereas "*Nafakhtu fehe min Roohi*" or "I breathed into one My soul" is a delicate pointer to 'His Own Self'. It is like making a torch of cotton wool to set it on fire to eradicate the germs of the disease.

The principal factor, it may be remembered, is the "Divine Law and code of conduct for the human being" which acts as one's guide, the moderator, and the monitor. In final analysis, we come again to the same thing, namely, the essence of the existence of human being, being in one's realization of one's own self to gain the "*Ma'rifa*" or Gnosis of God. How to understand and recognize one's self is the key to how to try and obtain the "Ma'rifa" or Gnosis of God. In the same way, to understand the truth about these souls, is to try to attain the knowledge of the Hereafter.

The basic foundation of the faith ("*Deen*" or Path to God), among other pre-requisites, lies in explicit faith in God and His ordained 'Day of Judgment'. Therein lies a secret recondite in its seclusion where we are not allowed to touch upon. Nor can it be understood or broached with ease as in its deep depths, lies hidden the "*Ma'rifa tul Haq*" and the "*Akhirah*", i.e., the verity of the Most Supreme Lord and His promised Hereafter. So, you may totally enter into and exhaust your wisdom in endeavoring to get its knowledge and understanding. Its research is so eerie, so uncanny, so intricate that it verges on the unfathomable to the extent that those who have heard the least about it were awe-stuck, got stupefied and declined to accept even the alphas and omegas of it and exclaimed that it is impossible, based on impiety of thought and on an utterly unworthy exercise in futility. Neither the Prophetic traditions nor the Holy Qur'an bears on the issue [explicitly]. Then how will you be able to dare to do so? That is why people just cannot listen to it. The prophets have therefore stated:

كلموا الناس على قدر عقولهم

"Speak to the people according to the level of their intelligence [and mental capacities]."

That is why some of the prophets were apprised by God, to not touch upon those characteristics of God Almighty which the people may not be able to understand because when they will not be able to comprehend them, they would decline to believe in them which would be injurious to them.

The truth about the real soul of human being ('human soul') has been described in detail. The 'animal soul' dies when the limbs of the body of human being become inert and lifeless. The 'human soul' remains manifest regardless [of life or death]. Therefore, the terms resurrection of human being, the day of judgment, the resurrection, do not mean in derivation that after 'nothingness', the human being would be brought to existence as such again. Rather, it means that one will be given the form, a new body, the way it was done formerly and then one would again be refurbished with the requisite characteristics and qualities. It would be very easy [for God compared to the first creation in which body and soul were both created].

They should realize that good deeds result in the purity and the grandeur of the soul. Why should such nonconformists fail to acknowledge, is beyond one's comprehension. One should, therefore, logically learn that the saints (Gnostics), the elites of God, consider themselves in journey through this world. Such a person, travelling on this path, trading and gathering the goods for one's profit and the non-profitable material to forestall loss, is actually carrying the good bargains made by one on the way to one's final destination, i.e., the Hereafter. One knows:

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّآ إِلَيْهِ رَٰجِعُونَ

"To God we belong and to Him is our final return (destination and homecoming)."
(Qur'an, Chapter 2, Verse 156)

Therefore, one remains fully alive to one's status of being in transit all the time. One's actual country is not this world. As such, one proceeds along this path collecting the final merchandise in one's sojourn at different halting points (stops) and milestones, fully aware that when one reaches one's goal, one would fetch a fair price for what one has acquired along the way thus far, in the country of one's permanent residence, the Hereafter, for one.

There are four distinct stations or milestones in the travels of the soul. Soul is the reality of human being while body is not. Soul also has a resting place – the place it has originated from is its real home or country and it has come to this world in its travels and it has many milestones before it returns back to its origin. Every milestone in the journey of the soul, is a world in itself if seen with some philosophic contemplation. They are as follows:

1. The first milestone is the "*'Alam Mahsusaat*" or the "realm of sense and sensibilities".
2. The second milestone is that of the "*'Alam Takhayyulat*" or of the "realm of conception [of thoughts and ideas]".
3. The third milestone is that of the "*'Alam Mauhumaat*" or the "realm of discernment of the undiscerned".
4. The fourth milestone is of the "*'Alam Ma'qulaat*" or the "realm of good order, achievement and self-awareness". It is in this milestone that one gets awareness of the self or of one's own reality and truth.

Let's try to and understand their status by the following example:

1. As long as one remains or is in "'*Alam Mahsusaat*" or the "realm of sense and sensibilities", one is like a moth that hovers and hovers around the burning flame instinctively. The moth has the eyes but does not have the intellect to think and remember. The attraction of the moth for the burning flame is proverbial for its intrinsic trait to evade darkness and be inflamed with the love of the light. As it is not possessed with the power of balanced thought and safety, in its search for an exit in the illumination, it erroneously considers the burning flame to be that opening, with the result that it ultimately falls on the incandescent flame and dies. If the moth was endowed with the capability of reasoning, it would not have gone near the flame after first warm glow of it felt on its feathers. This dearth [of intellect] makes the moth not reach the status of any reckoning. For instance, in contradistinction, other animals try to shy away from a thing when they are hurt. The very sight of a stick makes them flee from danger.

2. In the second stage of "'*Alam Takhayyulat*" or "realm of conception [of thoughts and ideas]", human being dwells in the realm of cattle and feeble-minded animals.

3. The third realm is of the aforementioned "'*Alam Mauhumaat*" or the "realm of discernment of the undiscerned". At this level, human being comes at par with goat and horse, so to say, i.e., in antithesis to the feeble-minded animals of the second stage, at this stage, one recognizes one's enemies and tries to avert danger by natural impulses, namely, the endeavors to escape for one's life, the moment one casts one's eyes on a wolf or a lion, although one may not have seen them before. Something in one tells one not to dread a mighty ox, a camel, or a giraffe, although, they are larger in size than them. This instinct is naturally [and intrinsically] engrained in one by God. Yet these animals are not so intelligent, i.e., at that level where they may be considered to be competent to look after themselves that comes in the fourth stage.

4. The fourth stage is of "'*Alam Ma'qulaat*" or the "realm of good order, achievement and self-awareness" as stated before. Till the third stage, human being remains in the domain of obscurity. It is actually from here that human being enters the status of being a human, i.e., in the realm of the glory of the human being. One sees such things in this stage where conjecture and superstition are totally eliminated.

In "'*Alam Mahsusaat*" or the "realm of sense and sensibilities", human being starts assessing and evaluating things in their right perspective avoiding the things to come. Here, one sums up the things as one sees them. Things have an entity, an identification. One tries to classify them correctly and generally succeeds in doing so. Naturally, in the world of "*Mahsusaat*" or the "realm of sense and sensibilities", human being's concentration is based on such feelings which are conveyed to one by one's discerning sensations, like walking on the earth. But at the last, the fourth stage, it also implies one's capacity to be able to do much more than that, like walking on water. This

is the stage of ascendance of human being, the "'*Alam Ma'qulaat*" or the "realm of good order, achievement and self-awareness". Here in glaring comparison, one walking about could be based on the verity of facts of a different nature, accepted by one's soul and as such capitalize in one being able to walk on water. This is the eminent status of the prophets and God's "*Walis*" or intimate friends or saints, like walking in air. People asked Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him), if Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) or Jesus Christ could walk on water? He replied:

وَلَوْ ازْدَادَ يَقِيْنًا لَمَشٰى فِى الْهَوَاءِ

"[Jesus did walk on water, however,] If his conviction had been firmer, he would have walked in air."

It shows that such things are in "'*Alam Idrak*" or the "realm of conceivable or possible". Thus, there are many stages of human being mounting the ladder of stature from the first rung to the last rung of eminence and acquiring angelic traits which took human being to one's "*Meraj*" or the pinnacle of achievement and glory. There are many hazards in this ascent from the lowest strata of "*Asfalus Safileen*" (lowest of the low) to the zenith of the "*Aa'la Illiyeen*" (highest of the high) as is stated in the Holy Qur'an:

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا ٱلْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ وَٱلْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَن يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا
وَحَمَلَهَا ٱلْإِنسَٰنُ ۖ إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا ﴿٧٢﴾

"We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and to the mountains, but they refused to carry it and were afraid of it; human being carried it who was surely unjust and ignorant." (Qur'an, Chapter 33, Verse 72)

There are various stages in the ascent of human being from the lowest status of animals and stones to that of the pedestal of angels. This is so because there is no danger in what's on earth in "*Jamadaat*" or stones, growth, and vegetation. They do not know. Vice versa, the "*Aa'la Illiyeen*" or highest of the high are stationed at the height of their glory. It is not possible for them to descend from there, as is inscribed in the Holy Qur'an:

وَمَا مِنَّآ إِلَّا لَهُۥ مَقَامٌ مَّعْلُومٌ

"Every one of us has a known station there." (Qur'an, Chapter 37, Verse 164)

Animals are amongst "*Asfalus Safileen*", the lowest. Therefore, there is no progress for them. However, human being in the middle rung [of the spiritual ladder] is in danger. One can sink to the depths of the animals, to the lowest levels [to become like them]. One can also soar high to the heights of the level of angels ("*Malaika*"). The capability, the prowess to shoulder such grave responsibility of being "*Ashraful Makhluqaat*" or the best of all creations, is therefore a matter of the [true] essence [of human being]. It implies that only human being at one's best, in one's grand stature of being "*Ashraful Makhluqaat*" or the best of all creations, could accept the challenge.

The meaning and purpose of this treatise is, therefore, to look deeper into things, not merely to have a superficial look at what they superficially appear to be but to ascertain what they really are. This discourse about the purpose of human being's journey through life is as such food for thought for those who wish to pick up the words of wisdom and concentrate on their intrinsic worth. There are not many works of this nature nor many people who may want to or be able to comprehend it. Hence, the present dialog on the subject should be sufficient.

There are quite a few people who are neither wise nor do they follow the Divine law. Such are the people who find themselves in doldrums about the state of the "*Akhirah*" or the Hereafter. Rather they are doubtful about it. Actually, when the worldly desires take the better of them, it suits them to rebut the Hereafter. They do so and make excuses to defend themselves. The devil supervenes them with its evil deeds, with all its charms and aids and abets them to think that the punishment of the Day of Judgment is a fanciful hallucination created to terrify people. As regards to the promise of the Paradise to the righteous, they also brand it as mere charismatic showmanship, a fantasy of mental fanfare evolved to put human being to hardships of dry, dreary lives and nothing else. Therefore, they look down upon the adherents of the Divine law.

Some people pretend to be above all such considerations while dressed in rags (a dress of humble *Sufis* or spiritual travelers or strivers in the path of spiritual attainment). Such pretentions do not help them the least. Nor do they have any station of merit. Actually, such imposters do themselves as much harm as to other simpletons who get beguiled by them into considering them to be people of some spiritual status, which they cannot understand. In reality, they have no logic or arguments to support them. How can such people have any real concealed worth in them? They have nothing up in their sleeve. Under the circumstances, they should be told in no uncertain terms that if one hundred twenty-four thousand prophets, all the sages of the time, all the learned scholars ("'*Ulema*") and saints (friends and intimates of God or "*Awliya*") were all wrong and only they are right, then there is nothing more to add to the subject in the light of their ignorance and arrogance.

One may say that maybe you are the one who is mistaken. Hence, you could not understand the truth about the Hereafter and God's punishment ("'*Adhab*"), the torture of the soul, the very precept of the "soul" due to the dominance of our sensory perceptions, accepting what is not experienced by the five senses, as wrong on such flimsy ground is not tangible. A person with such conceit, must be diagnosed immediately that one is not at all in one's right elements especially when one says, "Just as I know that two are more than one, I don't need to be told, I know fully well that there is no such thing as 'soul'. It has no permanence, and physical joy or pain can, under no circumstances, be considered in conjunction with the joy or pain of the soul". It is such people about whom God has said:

وَإِن تَدْعُهُمْ إِلَى ٱلْهُدَىٰ فَلَن يَهْتَدُوٓاْ إِذًا أَبَدًا

"So, if you call them to the guidance, even then they will not ever be guided." (Qur'an, Chapter 18, Verse 57)

Suppose one advances the argument, “Why should I spend the rest of my life in the hovel of piety and unnecessarily restrain myself from the joys that the world has to offer me, when I have no clues on what you are trying to tell me about the verity of the soul and the Hereafter since they look rather far-fetched to me? In any case, I am not aware of these matters”. In such a case, the answer is that, “Now that you have accepted this much, why don’t you follow the Divine law and guidance? It is based on logic that when you are not aware of a thing, you should not take any risk. Suppose you extend your hand to eat out of a plate and you are told that a snake has just put its mouth in it, you will immediately withdraw from the meal. This statement may be wrong, yet, the prudence in you will never make you partake of the food, no matter how delicious it may be. Likewise, suppose you are sick and in fear of your life and the person who writes the charms of healing ask you to give one a small amount of silver, so that one may be able to prepare the amulet for you, you will accede to this demand despite your apprehensions [and reservations] to the contrary. Also, if a clairvoyant tells you that when moon reaches such and such stage you should take some bitter medicine for your treatment. Despite its fantasy, you would most likely follow one’s advice for your health, also on the ground that one may be right”.

So how can one hundred and twenty-four thousand prophets, scores of sages, learned scholars (“’*Ulema*”), and saints or intimates of God (“*Awliya*”) be wrong and hearsay, while a quack or a fortune teller may be right? This should induce the human being to reconsider one’s position. It is likely that one may get inspired to do so on the basis that if these people are right then why should I deny the Hereafter, may be that by not listening to them and indulging in worldly pleasures blindly, I may be irrevocably blighted in the next world. So why should I not step away now [from my untenable position that cannot be sustained]?

Hypothetically, if the entire world was to be filled to the brim with rye-corn and a sparrow was assigned the task to pick up one rye corn every one thousand years, still it is a moot point if the rye-corn would meet the eternity. So why take the risk of the punishment of the Hereafter from here to the Day of Judgment, one should think. People make voyages in boats and ships and suffer hardships to sell their merchandise for their subsistence. Why should human being not do it? Piety, grit, and perseverance pays the striver good dividends.

Ali (May God’s pleasure be on him) [a great companion and cousin of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)] told an atheist in a religious debate, “If what you are saying is correct then you will be saved and we will be saved but if what we are saying is correct [and what you are saying is wrong] then only we will be saved and you will face eternal Divine retribution”. Ali (May God's pleasure be on him) was a sage. He could not have advanced the argument more powerfully. He said so not because he had any doubt in what he was saying but he had so forcefully framed the premises of his statement in view of the mindset of the atheist.

Hence, we come to the conclusion that a person who remains idling (wasting) one's time in the worldly affairs at the cost of one's Hereafter ("*Akhirah*"), one's Hereafter is in peril. In the light of the strength of the strong arguments advanced here and the examples provided, it is appropriate for the dissenter to take no risks and be on terra firma (solid ground).

وَالسَّلَامُ عَلٰى مَنِ اتَّبَعَ الْهُدٰى

"And peace be on one who follows the guidance."

We have summed up the discourse on the Gnosis ("*Ma'rifa*") of God, self ("*Nafs*"), this world and the Hereafter. God-willing we will now explain the forty essential elements ("*Arakan*" or steps) for eternal happiness and everlasting success.

This is how Ghazali ended his marvelous exposition of the four titles (or requirements) of the alchemy or transformative agent of eternal bliss and everlasting success in his great book "*Kimiya-e-Sa'adat*" or "Alchemy or Transformative Agent of Change for Eternal Happiness and Endless Success". He then provided the following introduction to the forty principles of eternal happiness and everlasting success [6]:

We have already dwelt at some length on the following:

1. The Gnosis ("*Ma'rifa*") of God,
2. Knowing one's own self ("*Nafs*"),
3. Knowing the reality of the world ("*Dunya*"), and
4. Knowing the reality of the Hereafter ("*Akhirah*").

The secret of obtaining God's approval and His blessings, lies in worshipping Him truly and sincerely and in His obedience. Human being should consequently be careful to do the following:

A. One should not only be the most humble and obedient servant of God and worship Him, but one should also have the bearing, the personality, the good demeanor of a good human being. One's general conduct would as such, become appealing to others [who are all fellow servants of God irrespective of their race, religion, color, nationality, culture, belief or anything else like that], besides one's own self.

B. This is as far as how a person looks. But that is not enough. One should also behave in society in such a way that one's conduct remains in bounds of the Divine law and guidance. One would then come to be recognized as such.

C. The aforementioned constitutes one's outward conduct that others see. Now we come to one's soul [or inner reality]. As such, it is incumbent upon human being to protect one's heart from the evil and its devastations [that it wreaks on one's inner being with ominous repercussions for one's outer being].

D. One must not only take care of the above mentioned "don'ts" but also take full care of its "do's", i.e., having safeguarded one's heart, one's soul from the evil, one must at the same time garnish and adorn the soul with good virtuous and noble inner qualities.

Thus, by following the "don'ts" of not allowing in soul what is evil and injurious to it and by pursuing the "do's" of doing all those things that are good and pure and developing beautiful inner qualities of the soul, one will be feeding one's soul with food that is conducive to its wellbeing. Thus, one will be saved from the "*Muhlikat*" or the fatal effects of the inner evil (all negativities and harmful tendencies, traits, dispositions, and states of inner being) and will be fortified by the "*Munjiyat*" or inner [sublime] qualities of the soul that purify, beautify and adorn it, of which one's soul would be justly proud of. These four essential elements [of the alchemy or transformative agent of change that bring about eternal happiness and everlasting success] are each divided into ten parts and are as follows...

At this point, Ghazali begins the exposition of forty principles (or steps) of eternal bliss and everlasting success. Out of these forty principles, twenty principles are related to conducting our outward lives and twenty are related to our inner lives with the view of transforming our hearts and souls to turn around our lives. In the next two parts of this exposition, twenty principles related to our inner lives and inner transformation are presented here in condensed form from Ghazali's marvelous exposition in his compendium of wisdom "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God".

The first part of this treatise that deals with expounding the reality of human being and real purpose of human life and attainment of eternal happiness and endless success now comes to an end. Now the second part of this treatise begins.

Part 2: The Inner Destructive Characteristics – Negative Inner Qualities Harming and Endangering Individuals, Societies and Entire Nations

After explaining the reality of the inner being of the human being and real purpose of life in preceding discussions, we will now embark on the exposition of the inner destructive characteristics – the negative inner traits from the lower self that are embedded deep within the soul. These traits are outright destructive for the well-being of individuals, societies, entire nations, and the world as they lead to sufferings that plague our inner beings, societies, communities, nations, and world today. After next two chapters that further explore the inner reality of human being, the next eight chapters will take a closer look at these inner destructive characteristics to understand them and outline the cures to eradicate them. Ghazali, elucidating a profound truth in his last book, writes that all hardships, turmoil, destructions and debacles that have ever happened in the world in the entire human history since the time immemorial, and will happen till the end of times, have happened and will happen due to the lower self of the human being (*Minhaj al-Abideen* or "Best Path for the Worshippers", Chapter 3 titled "The Obstacle of Four Gorges [in the path of inner perfection]") That is the reason the destructiveness of the lower self needs eradication with utmost earnestness in the inner being. The second part of this book illuminates the path one must take to defeat the destructiveness that emanates from within, so that the positive forces within can flourish and uplift individuals, societies and the entire world to their fullest potential.

Chapter 1 - Knowing the Mysteries of the Soul an Imperative for Spiritual Journey of Self-Awareness, Illumination and Enlightenment

Ghazali's first book in the third volume or quarter of his *magnum opus* "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God" deals with the wonders and mysteries of the heart and soul, the way they get entrapped into negativities, and the way they can be protected and nurtured to tread the path of goodness and positivity in thoughts, feelings, words, deeds and being. This marvelous eye-opening exposition of the subject will guide all towards the means of attaining inner peace, tranquility, and true happiness. Ghazali's exposition is being presented here in condensed form as follows [7]:

Meaning and Purpose of Terms Self (*Nafs*), Soul (*Ruh*), Heart (*Qalb*) and Intellect (*'Aql*)

Let it be clear that these four terminologies will be used in abundance in discussions related to inner destructive and constructive traits, qualities, characteristics, propensities, dispositions, and temperaments. There are very few among scholars who are familiar with the real meanings of these four terminologies and have correct knowledge of the differences of their meanings, limitations, and implications. That's why, mistakes are made in the intent of these terms. I will provide the explanation of these terms in a way that is related to our intent and purpose [of explaining the wonders and mysteries of the soul] as follows:

First Term – Heart (*Qalb*): "Heart" can be used in two meanings: a piece of flesh that is on the left side of the chest. It is a peculiar type of flesh that has a gap in the middle that has black colored blood in it and it is the fountain of soul and means of life. However, explanation of its shape, form and state are not tied to the purpose of our discussion. That is the topic for the physicians. Religious and spiritual matters are not related to it as besides human beings, even animals are not devoid of it and dead and alive bodies both have it. In this book, wherever this term "heart" will be used, it will not mean its physical shape, form, and state since that would mean that it's a piece of flesh and belongs to the realm of the visible. Not only humans but even animals can perceive it with their eyes.

Second meaning of this term is that "heart" is a Divine spiritual subtlety that is related to the physical heart inside the body and this very subtlety is the reality of human being. It is the one that perceives. It's the one that is [Divinely] addressed and is subjected to disciplining and consequences. Intellects are unable to perceive the connection this subtlety ["heart"] has with the physical heart because this connection is the same that dimensions have with the bodies and [inner] qualities with the possessors of those qualities and tools with user of tools and a resident with the residence. This similarity, relationship and connection will not be explained due to two reasons. First reason is that it is related to spiritually unveiled knowledge (*Uloom al-Mukashafa*), while the

purpose of this book is the explanation of revealed knowledge (*Uloom al-Mu'amla*). Second reason is that to explain it, curtain will need to be lifted from the secret of the soul. It is such a secret that nothing has been revealed or stated regarding it from the tongue of the prophethood [i.e., none of the prophets, including Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him), revealed anything about the secret of the soul]. What right does a non-prophet [even though one may be a saint or spiritually perfected individual] has to say anything regarding it? It should be remembered that wherever the word "heart" is used in this book, it would refer to the Divine spiritual subtlety that was mentioned before [and not the physical heart in the human body]. I will explain the states and qualities of this subtlety [called "heart"]. Discussion about its reality and its constitution is not my objective.

Second Term – Soul (*Ruh*): It also has two meanings. First is that the "soul" is the name of a subtle substance that resides in the space inside the physical heart. From this center, the soul spreads in the entire body through veins and arteries. The spreading of soul inside body and to give light of life to the parts of the body and to grant sensory capabilities [peculiar] to the five senses, is similar to a lamp placed in a house and the spreading of light from it all over inside the house. This similitude proves that "soul" plays the role of a lamp, and life is similar to the light and the soul running through the body is similar to a lamp spreading and permeating light in its surroundings. This meaning of the term "soul" is in accordance with the terminology of physicians. In other words, soul is a subtle febricity or light feverishness which in its own genesis is rather moderate, emanates from the veins of the [physical] heart and is formed from its own febricity. This meaning [of soul] is not pertinent to this discussion but rather a topic of interest for physicians who administer cure for bodily ailments. The doctors of religion (spiritual masters) who cure the diseases of the heart (i.e., inner spiritual diseases) do not concern themselves with this meaning but instead they say that soul is a perceptive subtlety in human being. The explanation of this subtlety has also been provided in the explanation of the heart. Following verse points to the same meaning:

قُلِ ٱلرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّى

"Tell them (O Prophet Muhammad) that soul is from the command of my Lord."
(Qur'an, Chapter 17, Verse 85)

It's such a mysterious Divinely related subtle existence that most intellects are deficient in comprehending its reality and constitution.

Third Term – Self (*Nafs*): This term's meaning is also shared with various other terms. Two of the meanings of this term are close to the purpose of this explanation. One is that "self" (*Nafs*) is that existence that is a collection of forces of anger, wrath, and carnal pleasures in human beings. This meaning is the most prevalent among the *Sufis* (strivers in the spiritual path seeking spiritual perfection, illumination and consequently, intimacy and Gnosis of God). That's why they say that inner spiritual struggle (*Mujahada*) against the self (*Nafs*) and controlling and taming desires of carnal pleasures [that emanate from it] are essential. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) has intended the same in below saying of his:

اعدی عدوک نفسک التی بین جنبیک

"Your biggest enemy is the one who is inside you (i.e., your own self)". (Taken from Hadith [Prophetic teachings] collection *Bayhaqi* on the authority of Ibn Abbas [May God be pleased with him])

Second meaning of self (*Nafs*) is also related to the Divine spiritual subtlety that has been mentioned before. In fact, according to that meaning, this is the reality and being of the human being. But this self is imbued with different inner qualities in different situations. Hence, when it becomes at peace with Divine obedience and its opposition and doubt gets dissipated, it's called the "self at peace" (*Nafs al-Mutma-inna*). God has addressed the "self at peace" with these words:

يَٰٓأَيَّتُهَا ٱلنَّفْسُ ٱلْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ﴿٢٧﴾ ٱرْجِعِىٓ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً ﴿٢٨﴾

"O the self at peace! Return to your Lord in a state of you being pleased with Him and He being pleased with you." (Qur'an, Chapter 89, Verses 27-28)

The meaning of self that has been mentioned previously, does not represent a return to God [and Divine guidance] which is the glory of servitude [to God] but instead in that meaning, we find rebellion and rejection of Divine guidance which is inspired and instigated by Satan. Another state of self is that it is devoid of perfection of servitude and worship [of God] but it rebukes itself for its shortcomings. Self in this state is called the "reproaching self" (*Nafs al-Lawwama*). God says:

وَلَآ أُقْسِمُ بِٱلنَّفْسِ ٱللَّوَّامَةِ

"I swear by the reproaching self [that blames itself for its own shortcomings and evils, i.e., *Nafs al-Lawwama*]." (Qur'an, Chapter 75, Verse 2)

Another state of self is that it is helpless in stopping the flow and pressure of the base low desires for carnal pleasures and evil and surrenders to it with abject surrender. Self in that state is called the "evil inspiring self" (*Nafs al-Ammaratu bi as-Su*). Quran mentions the self in that state in the incident of Prophet Joseph (Yusuf) (Peace of God be upon him) with the ruler of Egypt:

وَمَآ أُبَرِّئُ نَفْسِىٓ ۚ إِنَّ ٱلنَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌۢ بِٱلسُّوٓءِ

"I do not ascribe purity and deem my 'self' as innocent [because] the lower self only inspires evil [in the heart of human being]." (Qur'an, Chapter 12, Verse 53)

In essence, 'self' (*Nafs*) is bad when it is inclined to evil, low base desires, and propensities for carnal pleasures (*Nafs al-Ammaratu bi as-Su*) and is good and praiseworthy when it's at peace and is satisfied [with the Divine commandments and guidance and avoiding all evils and negativities in all shapes and forms] (*Nafs al-Mutma-inna*).

Fourth Term – Intellect (*'Aql*): This term too is used for multiple meanings. Two of these meanings are close to the purpose of this book. First one is that 'intellect' is the name of the knowledge of reality of matters and things. In this case, intellect is tied to the [inner] characteristic of knowledge and its abode is the heart. Sometimes, 'intellect' refers to the possessor of knowledge (*Mudrik al-'Uloom*) which is the characteristic of the heart. In case of this meaning, 'intellect' is the same Divine spiritual subtlety that has been aforementioned in explanation of the previous three terminologies. Please understand regarding the explanation of the two meanings of 'intellect', that everyone knows the reality that the knower or knowledgeable person exists in person and is apparent and visible, and the characteristic of knowledge is deeply ingrained within such a one. The quality or characteristic is something other than the possessor of it. Hence, 'intellect' sometimes refers to this characteristic that is referred to as knowledge and sometimes it refers to the possessor of that characteristic. A prophetic narration (Hadith of Prophet Muhammad [Peace and blessings of God be upon him] refers to the same meaning as follows:

"The first thing God created was the intellect (*'Aql*)".

Here the characteristic referred to, cannot be knowledge since knowledge does not exist by itself but what's referred to is a body (span). Why is the body created first because the abode of comprehension is needed first then knowledge is to be created which is the characteristic of this abode or both need to be created together? Also, it's not possible to address the characteristic of knowledge.

Upshot of this [discussion of four important terms] is that the import of these four terms is similar as well as dissimilar. A person familiar with the reality of these four terms knows that there is no difference between these terms. In order to explain this point, it was necessary to explain the similarities and differences in meanings of these four terms.

Wherever Qur'an and Hadith (prophetic narrations of Prophet Muhammad [Peace and blessings of God be upon him]) use the term 'heart', they are referring to the faculty that perceives the reality of things. This faculty exists within human beings. The word 'heart' is used to refer and allude to this faculty because this faculty of perception has a special relationship with the physical heart. Even though this faculty is related to the whole body and utilizes all parts of the body to do their respective works, it is not directly related to the parts of the body but only through the means of the physical heart. This means that the physical heart in the human body is the abode of this Divine spiritual subtlety, knowledgeable, capital city and the rider of this mount.... This means that physical heart is the kingdom of this Divine spiritual subtlety [called "heart" or "soul"] and is the throne on which it sits and rule the entire kingdom of the body. The physical heart is the starting point of the dominion of this subtlety. Upshot of this is that the connection that the Divine spiritual subtlety called "heart" has with the physical heart and the body is the same connection that God has with the "*Arsh*" (or "Dominion of Divine Omnipotence") and with the "*Kurs*i" (or the Divine Throne or the "Heavenly seat of Supreme Divine Excellence").

Legions of the Heart (*Qalb*)

God says:

وَمَا يَعْلَمُ جُنُودَ رَبِّكَ إِلَّا هُوَ

"No one knows the armies of your Lord except Him." (Qur'an, Chapter 74, Verse 31)

This verse mentions God's armies whose numbers are not known to anyone other than Him. These armies are present in hearts, souls, and various other innumerable universes. Since the topic of our discussion is the heart, I will mention some of the armies of the heart.

Heart has two armies: First one that can be seen with the external eye and second one that can be perceived through the eye of the intellect (*'Aql*). Heart is like the king and its armies are like his ministers and servants. Armies that can be observed with the external eye include hands, feet, eyes, ears, tongue, and all other organs of the body. All these bodily organs, whether external or internal, are servants of the heart [as they comply with its commands and serve it] and they have been obligated for its obedience and it uses them as it wants, and their duty is service and obedience to the heart and they are not capable of rebelling against it or act against its desires and wishes. For example, when the eye is ordered to open it opens, when ordered to close it closes. When feet are ordered to move, they move, when tongue is ordered to speak it speaks. All organs are like that. Their obedience is similar to the obedience of angels to God due to some reasons. Hence, angels are obedient [to God] by their very nature as the purpose of their creation is [Divine] obedience and they cannot deviate from this purpose. The state angels are in is:

لَّا يَعْصُونَ ٱللَّهَ مَآ أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ

"They do not deviate from God's commandments and they do what they have been told." (Qur'an, Chapter 66, Verse 6)

However, there is one difference between the obedience of angels and obedience of bodily organs: angels have the knowledge of their obedience, but bodily organs don't have that. When eyes are told to be opened, they open up, but they are not even aware of their existence nor do they know that they are opening up in obedience to their king and its rule, which is the heart.

Just like heart is in need of a riding mount and of provisions for the spiritual journey to Divine Reality (*Suluk* or spiritual struggle to reach the "*Ma'rifa*" or Gnosis of God which is the purpose of life as Ghazali has previously stated), likewise it needs helpers and servants. This is the very journey for which it has been created. God says:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ ٱلْجِنَّ وَٱلْإِنسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

"And I have created *Jinns* (supernatural invisible creatures that are present on earth) and humans only for My worship." (Qur'an, Chapter 51, Verse 56)

The riding mount of the heart is the body, knowledge is its provision for this [spiritual] journey and the way to acquire this provision is performing righteous good deeds. It's not possible for any servant [of God, i.e., human being] to reach God without staying in this world [and living a worldly life]. To reach the farthest destination, it's imperative to reach [the milestone of] the closest destination. That's the reason world is called the "farmland of the Hereafter" [because what you sow here, you will reap there], world is one destination among the destinations of guidance [towards the truth]. It is called "world" because it is a near destination. Hence to reach the next destination, it's necessary to take provisions from this [nearest] destination. Since body has the status of the riding mount for reaching the [ultimate] destination [of Divine Presence or Gnosis of God], it's imperative to guard and protect the body. Preservation and protection of body is done through giving it the food favorable for its health and wellbeing and preventing it from food that can be harmful or deadly. Two armies are needed for acquiring food: First one is internal and that is the appetite (desire or hunger) and second one is external such as hands and other bodily organs that are used for acquiring food.

Desire has been created in the heart for this very reason and external bodily organs have been endowed for fulfilment of this desire. Likewise, two armies have been endowed [to humans] for protection against the destructive things. First one is in the inner being which is called "anger" and second one is in the exterior which is made up of hands and feet. Human being uses them to carry out the implications of anger. Presence of these organs in the body is like a soldier having weapons and tools of war. Additionally, the desire and need for food is not sufficient but instead, human being should know the state of the food and that's why, there is a need for inner and outer armies. Outer armies include the five senses like hearing, seeing, smelling, touching, and tasting and inner armies include that one is not devoid of perception of these five senses. A lot of discussion can be done on the servants and helpers of the heart. This discussion is so detailed oriented that even volumes [of books] are not enough for it. I have attempted to write something on it in the Book of Gratitude [in this present book "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God"] (Chapter 12). A seeker of truth (*Salik*) should be contented with that.

There are three types of servants of the heart: First type [of servants of the heart] are those that instill a desire for something which is either for acquiring benefit or for repulsing harm. The example of first one is the desire (e.g., hunger) and example of second one is anger. This type of servant is also called "intent". Second type includes the servants that cause movement of the limbs (or bodily organs) for achievement of a purpose or completion of an intent. It is called "power" or "ability" (*Qudra*) that is spread in all organs and in every artery and vein of the body. Second type includes the servants that perceive the reality of things like spies and get knowledge of them. The abilities of sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste are related to that. These forces are spread in their respective organs. This type is called "knowledge and perception".

Along with these inner servants, there are outer servants that play the role of tools and causes, such as the power to grasp in fingers and ability to see in eyes. Other forces and organs can be deduced and understood similarly.

The focus of our discussion is not outer organs since they are related to physical realm [that is visible] but we will discuss the inner helpers and servants that cannot be seen and observed by the eye and these are referred to as the "forces of perception and comprehension". Then these forces of perception are of two types: some reside in the outer organs and they are the five senses of hearing, seeing, taste, touch, and smell and some reside in veins of brain and they are also five. When one sees a thing and then closes eyes, the picture of what was seen is still in the heart and that is called "imagination". Then this picture gets associated with the remembrance of that object and that is called "memory". When one contemplates on what's left in memory and conjoins some with others and remembers what has been forgotten, and picture or image of the thing reappears in mind and gathers all the sense perceptions in his thought, then it's called remembrance, contemplation and shared sense. If God had not created the forces of memorization, contemplation, remembrance, imagination and thinking then brain would have been devoid of them just like hands and feet are devoid of forces other than what's intended for them. Since these forces are inner in nature, their abodes are also inner.

These are the various types of legions of the heart. Understanding and comprehending them is dependent on farsightedness. To make these understood by those lacking in knowledge, requires details. That's why, some examples will be used to shed light on these types so that even the beginners can comprehend them.

Inner Servants of the Heart (*Qalb*) and their Easily Understood Examples

When anger and desire, two servants of the heart, obey the heart completely and become subservient to it then it's a tremendous help in the spiritual path. Heart considers them the best companions in the spiritual journey and selfless and sincere helpers. Sometimes, these two servants are bent on disobedience and rebellion and instead of obeying the heart, they force it to obey them and become the reason for the destruction of the heart. However, heart has other servants and helpers besides these and if desire and anger incline to rebellion then heart should not be disappointed, instead, it should enlist the help of other servants [of the heart] against them. Sometimes, anger and desire join the group of Satan. If the heart does not seek help from the Divine legions and instead allows the armies of anger and desire dominate the self (*Nafs*) then it will be well on its way to destruction and tremendous loss. Most people are in in this state, their intellects are subservient to lusts and desires and seek excuses for their fulfilment. What should have happened instead, is that the lusts and desires should have become subservient to their intellects. This important point will be elaborated through some analogies as follows.

First Analogy: Let's suppose that the human self, the Divine spiritual subtlety that has been aforementioned a number of times, is similar to the king in its country and capital. Body is the center of its dominion and is the capital [city]. Bodily organs are similar to the royal staff. Power of Intellect is its sincere advisor and intelligent and loyal minister. Anger is its bodyguard and city judge, and protecting the king against its enemies is included among its royal duties. Lust (or desire) is its ill-behaved and ill-tempered servant that is responsible to provide food for the people of the city. This person is a habitual liar, deceptive, deceiver and evil who may appear sincere but behind the facade of its sincerity is a deadly poison. To disagree with the opinion and planning of the sincere advisor and minister (i.e., the intellect) is its nature and habit and there is not a single moment in which it does not oppose the intellect. In this case, if the king acts on the suggestions and planning of its minister, consults with it and shows by avoiding this evil servant that it's best to stay away from it in the best interests of governance. In addition, it instructs the city judge (i.e., the anger) to keep an eye on this evil servant and its followers and to punish it if it indulges in wrong actions. It is hoped that in this situation, this servant will not be able to rebel and will remain subservient and dependent to the king and the government will run with justice and discipline. Similarly, if the self (*Nafs*) continues to seek help from the intellect and at times strikes a blow on the lust through the bodyguard of anger; and sometimes seeks help from lust (or desire) to reduce the strength and domination of anger then all of its powers and abilities will stay in moderation [in a state of equilibrium], its mannerism and character will remain good. If it deviates from this path [of moderation] then it will be among those people about whom God says:

أَفَرَءَيْتَ مَنِ ٱتَّخَذَ إِلَٰهَهُۥ هَوَىٰهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ ٱللَّهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ

"Have you seen the condition of the one who has made his desires from the lower self as his God and God has [consequently] misguided him despite his knowledge?" (Qur'an, Chapter 45, Verse 23)

وَٱتَّبَعَ هَوَىٰهُ ۚ فَمَثَلُهُۥ كَمَثَلِ ٱلْكَلْبِ إِن تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْهِ يَلْهَثْ أَوْ تَتْرُكْهُ يَلْهَث

"He started to follow his base desires [and lusts] so his condition became like that of the dog whom if you strike, pants and if you leave it, it still pants." (Qur'an, Chapter 7, Verse 176)

Qur'an says about the one who protects one's self from the deception of lusts:

وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِۦ وَنَهَى ٱلنَّفْسَ عَنِ ٱلْهَوَىٰ ﴿٤٠﴾
فَإِنَّ ٱلْجَنَّةَ هِىَ ٱلْمَأْوَىٰ ﴿٤١﴾

"The one who dreaded standing before one's Lord and prevented the self (*Nafs*) from base low desires and lusts, Paradise will be one's abode." (Qur'an, Chapter 79, Verses 40-41)

The state of imposing anger and desire over each other and benefits obtained by this [inner struggle] will be listed in the chapter on spiritual struggle for disciplining the self, God-willing.

Second Analogy: Let's suppose that body is a city and intellect, i.e., the power of perception in human being, is its ruler and external and internal senses are its helpers and soldiers, bodily organs are its subjects, lower self - inclined to evil (*Nafs al-'Ammara*) – that can be construed as desire and anger, is its enemy and is desirous of taking over the government [of the intellect] to kill all the subjects. In this case, body is analogous to the battlefield where the city ruler is present in person to fight the enemy. If it dominates the battle and forces the enemy to run away, then this struggle will receive tribute and praise in the royal court. God says:

فَضَّلَ ٱللَّهُ ٱلْمُجَٰهِدِينَ بِأَمْوَٰلِهِمْ وَأَنفُسِهِمْ عَلَى ٱلْقَٰعِدِينَ دَرَجَةً

"God has increased and elevated the rank of those who strive with their selves and their wealth compared to the ones who just sit at home [and not do much]." (Qur'an, Chapter 4, Verse 95)

However, if it (i.e., the intellect) does not act bravely and gets defeated by the enemy (i.e., the lower self), it will then be an unfortunate act and will suffer grave consequences of negligence.

A prophetic narration (*Hadith*) refers to the same striving as follows:

رجعنا من الجهاد الاصغر الى الجهاد الاكبر

"We are returning from a small striving (a battle fought for legitimate self-defense and self-preservation against an invading army threatening community's very existence) to a greater striving (the spiritual struggle to subdue one's own self to defeat its evil propensities)".

Third Analogy: Let's suppose that intellect is a rider that is leaving with the intention of hunting. Desire and lust are its horse, and anger is its dog. If the rider has expertise in hunting, horse trained, and the dog tamed then this rider will be successful in one's objective. It can be said with certainty that the rider will return home successfully with the hunt. Second scenario is that the rider is unaware of this art, horse rebellious and the dog mad. It cannot be expected about such a person that one will return back successfully. If one just returns home safely that is more than enough. The lack of knowledge and expertise of the rider is like the ignorance of a human being, the rebelliousness of the horse is like the domination of lusts and madness of dog is like the domination of anger.

Characteristics of the Human Heart (*Qalb*)

What has been stated so far are not just possessed by human beings but also by the animals. For example, desire, anger, internal and external senses are in animals as they are in human beings. This is to such an extent that goat looking at a wolf understands that it wants to attack it and perceiving that from its heart it runs away. This is inner perception that is not peculiar to human beings and even the animals devoid of intellect make use of this capability and perceive their benefit and harm through it. Here the purpose is to enlist matters that are peculiar to human beings and because of them they enjoy superiority and excellence over other creations and closeness and intimacy with God.

Let it be known that the matters related to the human heart are only two: first is knowledge and second is intent. What's meant by knowledge here is the knowledge of worldly, next-worldly, and intellectual realities. These matters and realities are not perceived through senses and animals do not share with humans the ability to perceive them. Additionally, the logic and reason are also peculiar to the intellect because only human beings can decide that it's not possible to have one person be present in two places at the same time. Even though one has seen only a limited number of people, but this principle is applicable to all people in the world. Thus, we know that to apply this principle to all people is an additional matter that can only be related to the intellect. When such is the situation with acquired and outer knowledge, knowledge acquired through personal observation is more worthy of that principle. When human being looks at the final end of any matter and sees some good in it, it evokes in one a likeness for it and an enthusiasm to acquire it is born in one. This in intent is not the one that is called "lust" or "desire" that is also present in animals but it's the opposite of the intent for lust. The difference between lust and intent will be clear with one example where lust is inclined towards all types of tasty foods during illness, but the intellect stops one from this indulgence deeming it harmful. This prohibition is not from the lust but from the intellect. If God had not created the intent that appeals to the intellect and human being would have then acted upon them then the purpose of creation of intellect would have dissipated.

This shows that knowledge and intent in the human heart are two matters that are not found in animals and even in little children. Instead, this characteristic [of knowledge and intellect that help discern between right and wrong, harmful, and beneficial] is instilled in them after puberty even though lust, anger, outer and inner senses are there in them from the very beginning.

Two Degrees of Acquiring this Knowledge: We know that a child obtains this characteristic [of knowledge and intellect] after puberty. This obtainment or acquisition has two degrees. First degree is that one has the knowledge of the basics, i.e., one thinks of impossible as impossible and possible as possible. In this case it will be said that one is aware of the basics but does not have the observed knowledge. However, it can be said that one is close to acquiring the observed knowledge which in relation to basic knowledge, is like the calligrapher who may not be familiar with calligraphy but is familiar with the tools of calligraphy such as ink, pen and letters. Such a person cannot be called a calligrapher, but it can certainly be said that one is close to this art.

Second degree is that one acquires a wealth of these knowledges through experience, contemplation and active learning and one preserves this knowledge in the reservoir of one's memory with the intention that one can benefit from it whenever one wants. Such a person is like an expert calligrapher who may not be writing at this time but is well-versed in the knowledge of calligraphy and can write whenever one wants. This is the greatest degree [of rank] of human being. There are innumerable ranks in this degree. Amount of knowledge, whether more or less, and work, differences in ways of investigations are different for every person and hence, everyone is in a different state. Some hearts perceive these knowledges through spiritual awakening or inspiration (*Ilham*) and spiritual unveiling (*Kashf*). Some hearts acquire it through instruction and learning. Some people are so intelligent and fast learners that they understand the most difficult of matters in seconds. Some people are so dull-minded and slow learners that they do not understand anything without repetition, contemplation, and deliberation. The ranks of scholars, wise, prophets and saints are all different in this knowledge. As far as the highest rank is concerned, there is no limit or end since the circle of knowledge is extremely wide. The highest rank in it belongs to the prophet on whom most or all of the realities are revealed to him without any effort or learning by the Grace of the Almighty. This good fortune and real success (*Sa'adah*) draw one close to God. This closeness is not the closeness of place and distance but instead, it's the closeness in terms of spiritual meaning, reality, and inner characteristics. Climbing the ranks in this closeness [and intimacy with the Divine] and staying at a station in this spiritual journey, are milestones for the spiritual travelers. There is no limit of ranks, degrees, and stations in this spiritual journey. Every wayfarer is aware of the milestones traversed but is not aware of the future ones. However, one believes in them due to faith in the unseen, just like we believe in prophets and prophethood even though the reality of prophethood is not known to anyone other than the prophets. Just like an unborn child in fetus does not know the state of a suckling baby and suckling baby does not know the state of an older child who has started to understand things and such a child in turn does not know the state of a grown-up intelligent person or the knowledge one (grown up intelligent person) has acquired. Likewise, a discerning or intelligent person does not know what blessings [and spiritual endowments] God has bestowed upon His saints and prophets and what secrets (realities from the unseen realm that are unknown to ordinary people) have been revealed to them. God says:

مَّا يَفْتَحِ ٱللَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ مِن رَّحْمَةٍ فَلَا مُمْسِكَ لَهَا ۖ

"When God opens the doors of His Mercy and Blessings, there is no one who is capable of closing them." (Qur'an, Chapter 35, Verse 2)

This Divine mercy and blessings are common for all [of humanity without any discrimination] out of Divine generosity and favor and there is no stinginess in that. However, this is manifested in those hearts that are waiting for the arrival of breezes of Divine mercy and largesse that have been kept open for such advent as it is stated in a *Hadith* (a narration or tradition of Prophet Muhammed [Peace and blessings of God be upon him]):

ان لربكم في ايام دهركم لنفحات الا فتعرضوا لها

"In the days of your lives, there are many breezes of God's mercy and blessings. You should be on the lookout for them [as they are received when one is ready and capable of receiving them first]."

To "wait for these breezes and be on the lookout for them" means that one needs to cleanse and purify the heart [and soul] from the turbidity, impurities and filth that get accumulated in it due to reprehensible and evil characteristics and manners. This will be explained in detail soon. This Divine generosity and largesse have been referred to in the following *Hadith* (a narration of Prophet Muhammed [Peace and blessings of God be upon him]):

ينزل الله كل ليلة الى سماء الدنيا فيقول هل من داع فاستجيب له

"God descends on the earthly heaven (i.e., lowest of the seven heavens) every night and says, 'Is there someone who begs of Me so I can grant one?'" (Narrated by *Hadith* collections *Bukhari* and *Muslim* on the authority of Abu Hurairah and Abu Sa'eed [May God be pleased with them both])

Following *Hadith Qudsi* (a tradition of Prophet Muhammed [Peace and blessings of God be upon him] in which God is quoted by him) announces the same Divine mercy as follows:

لقد طال شوق الابرار الى لقائي وانا الى لقاءهم اشد شوقا

"The pious righteous are eagerly awaiting to meet with Me and I am more desirous of meeting them." (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Masnad al-Firdaus* on the authority of Abu al-Darda [May God be pleased with him])

من تقرب الي شبرا تقربت اليه ذراعا

"One who draws near to Me by a span, I draw near to one by a hand." (Narrated by *Hadith* collections *Bukhari* and *Muslim* on the authority of Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him])

It is learned from these traditions that hearts being devoid of the [inner] light of [spiritual] knowledge [and wisdom] is not due to any hindrance or stinginess on the part of the Creator and Bestower (God) but instead, hearts are deprived of these [inner spiritual] lights due to evil, turbidity, filth and obsession with other than God. Hearts are like vessels and as long as they are filled with water, air does not flow into them. Likewise, the light of God's Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*) does not enter the hearts indulged in other than God. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) has said:

لولا ان الشياطين يحومون على قلوب بني آدم لنظروا إلى ملكوت السماء

"If devils do not hover around the hearts of the children of Adam (i.e., all human beings), they would have witnessed the dominion of the heavens [due to their inner purity,

limpidity and spiritual excellence]." (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Musnad Ahmed* on the authority of Abu Hurairah)

To summarize, human being's specialty and peculiar characteristic is due to knowledge and wisdom and the most superior of all knowledges is the knowledge of God's Being (*Dhat*), qualities (*Sifat*) and actions (*Af'aal*). In this knowledge lies the secret of human perfection and this perfection hinges on one's supreme felicity, endless triumph, and eternal happiness (*Sa'adah abadiyya*). Through this, human being becomes capable of living in the proximity and closeness of God and achieving Divine Presence. Body is the mount (or transport vehicle) for the self (*Nafs*) and self is the abode of knowledge and [Divine] knowledge (Gnosis of God or *Ma'rifa*) is the real purpose of human life and is one's distinguishing quality. One has been created only for this very purpose. Just like horse shares the quality of having the power and strength to carry huge amount of weight with a donkey but is far superior to it in magnificence, beauty and speed, there are certain qualities that make human being superior to a donkey or a horse and these distinguishing qualities belong to the qualities of angels that are in close proximity of God. Human being is a creation in between angels and animals because in terms of food and nourishment, one is vegetation; in terms of senses, movement, capabilities and actions one is an animal; and in terms of appearance and built, one is an image on a wall. The [human] quality of knowledge and perception of reality of things and matters distinguishes one from animals. One who employs one's bodily organs and senses on [seeking] knowledge and action [according to that knowledge, keeping in mind that the most superior of all knowledges is the Divine knowledge that imparts one the state of Gnosis], not only resembles the angels but deserves to be included in the category of angels and be called "an angel of God" (*Malak Rabbani*) just as God made the women witnessing the beauty of Prophet Joseph (Peace and blessings of God be upon him), confess:

مَا هَٰذَا بَشَرًا إِنْ هَٰذَآ إِلَّا مَلَكٌ كَرِيمٌ

"This cannot be a man but [instead,] is an angel of God." (Qur'an, Chapter 12, Verse 31)

One who makes one's bodily enjoyments the center of one's thoughts and actions (i.e., purpose of one's life) and becomes totally engrossed in them then one is like the cattle that do not have any objective other than to graze and eat and one enters into the category of animals. In that case, one would be stupid like an ox or greedy like a pig or angry like a dog or acrimonious like a camel or arrogant like a cheetah or deceptive like a fox and if one is an embodiment of all of these characteristics and animalistic qualities then one would be the accursed devil (*Shaytan al-Rajeem*).

There is not a single external organ or internal sense (or faculty) that cannot be employed for closeness and intimacy with God as it will be explained in the book of gratitude and thankfulness. One who uses one's organs correctly (for right purposes) achieves success and the one who disobeys [the Divine commandments] suffers a great loss and gets humiliated. Perfection of one's happiness and success and completeness of felicity is that one makes meeting with God one's purpose [of life],

Hereafter as one's true home, present world as a temporary milestone or station, body as one's riding mount, [bodily] organs [and senses] as one's servants, and one's faculty of perception and comprehension, whose abode is the middle part of the [physical] heart, as the king and considers the faculty of thought and imagination in the front part of the brain, as the messenger of the king because the news from the senses comes to one and reside in the faculty of memory, remembrance and recollection, and protects them (i.e., the news from senses) like a treasurer [who protects the treasures]. Tongue is its expression or spokesperson, active organs are its actors, five senses are the spies of its kingdom and each one of these senses is appointed for search and supply of news. Eyes' sphere of responsibility is related to the world of colors, ears to the world of sounds and nose to the world of smells. All of these senses accumulate news from their respective worlds and supply them to the faculty of deliberation and thought. Faculty of deliberation and thought, which is the messenger, conveys these news to the treasurer of the kingdom which is the faculty of memory. Faculty of memory hands over the news to the king (the faculty of perception and deliberation) and one selects the news that are useful in running the affairs of the state, help complete the journey at hand, defeat the enemies of the state and deal with the bandits of the way. It's a great felicity and success to inform the organs [and senses] of their responsibilities and keep them busy in discharging them and in it lies the gratitude to God for His [immense] blessings. One who keeps the organs [and senses] in negligence [towards fulfilling their responsibilities] is an ill-fated humiliated loser. Such a one is a denier of God's bounties as has wasted the Divine legions or armies that were given to one for employing them against the enemies, honored the enemies and humiliated the Divine legions. In the end, one deserves a hard punishment and disgrace in the Hereafter. We seek God's refuge from the disgrace of the Hereafter and His retribution. Amen.

Our stated analogy [above] is corroborated through the tradition of Ka'ab al-Ahbar (May God be pleased with him) [who was a companion and helper of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)]. He said that he told Aisha (May God be pleased with her) [who was the wife of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) and a great transmitter of Prophetic traditions]: "Human being's eyes are one's guide, ears are one's protector, tongue is the spokesperson or transmitter, hands are the troops, feet are the messenger and heart is the king. If king is good, his subjects would be good too." She replied: "You are right. I have heard like this from Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)." (This tradition has been transmitted by *Abu Naieem* in [book] "Prophetic Medicine", *at-Tabarani* in "*Masnad at-Taseen*", and *Bayhaqi* in "*Sha'ab al-Iman*" on the authority of Prophetic companion and helper Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him]). Ali (May God be pleased with him) [who was a companion and helper of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)] drew an analogy of the heart by saying: "Hearts are the vessels of God on earth. The most beloved to God of them and most liked by Him is the softest, purest, and firmest. Heart's softness, purity and firmness is that it is soft for one's brethren, clear and pure in its certitude and firm in the Divine path (*Deen*)."

Ubayy bin Ka'ab (May God be pleased with him) [who was a companion and helper of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)] explaining the following verse:

مَثَلُ نُورِهِۦ كَمِشْكَوٰةٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ

"The parable of the Light of God is as if there were a niche and within it is a lamp." (Qur'an, Chapter 24, Verse 35)

Said: "It is the parable of [inner] light of the believer and of his or her heart and this parable:

أَوْ كَظُلُمَٰتٍ فِي بَحْرٍ لُّجِّيٍّ

'Or is like the depths of darkness in an immense deep ocean.' (Qur'an, Chapter 24, Verse 40)

is like the heart of a hypocrite".

Zaid bin Aslam has called the "Preserved Tablet" ("*Loh Mahfoodh*"; Preserved Tablet contains a complete record of all creations and existence and all happenings pertaining to them) mentioned in Qur'an as the heart of a believer and [famous saint and Gnostic] Sahl al-Tustari has compared heart to "*Arsh*" (simply "Throne" but in reality, it is the Dominion of Divine Omnipotence) and "*Kursi*" (the Heavenly seat of Supreme Divine Excellence).

Comprehensive Characteristics of the Heart (*Qalb*) and its Examples

Let it be known that the creation and composition of human being is a conglomeration of four things. Hence, one has four types of qualities and characteristics namely bestial, animalistic, satanic, and Divine. In terms of anger and rage dominating one, they cause one to commit bestial actions like enmity, rancor, beating, verbal abuse and cursing. In terms of lust and carnal desires having domination over one, one commits animalistic actions like greed, avarice, licentiousness, and jealousy. In terms of being a Divine command as stated in Qur'an:

قُلِ ٱلرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّى

"Say (O Muhammad!), the soul is from the command of my Lord." (Qur'an, Chapter 17, Verse 85)

One claims lordship and likes arrogance, superiority over others, peculiarity of characteristics and individuality, and dislikes servitude [to God], humility and subjugation. In the same vein, one likes to be aware of all knowledge and association with knowledge is beloved to one and association with ignorance is disliked by one. One claims to comprehend the reality of matters and claims to have acquired

knowledge and Gnosis even though the characteristics of comprehending all realities and superiority over all creations are characteristics of Lordship [that is not befitting for a human being but only to God], but not the characteristics of servitude and slavehood [to God]. Despite sharing the characteristics of rage and lust with beasts and animals, human being possesses the faculty of discernment, hence one has one additional characteristic which is the satanic quality. Satan is evil from head to toe and human being uses one's discernment in evil ways and employs fraud and deception to achieve one's objectives and sows the seed of evil in the abode of good (i.e., the human existence). These are the characteristics of devils and even those people share the characteristics of devils who have the elements of Divine, satanic, bestial, and animalistic qualities. The center of all these four qualities is the heart such that within the human skin, swine, dog, devil and wise are all gathered together. Swine is a symbol of lust and licentiousness. This impure animal that is a possessor of bad inward qualities is not bad because of its color and outer appearance, but instead is bad due to its greed and lust. That is also the state of a dog that is an embodiment of rage. Certain animals are not disliked because they are animals but because they have the extreme animalistic qualities like bestiality and enmity. In the same vein, the inner being (*Batin*) of the human being possesses bestiality of the beasts, enmity, rage and swine's greed and lust. Wild beast instigates its rage to commit carnage and swine instigates its greed to commit licentiousness and Satan keeps both of these [evil qualities] in constant combat against each other - sometimes he instigates greed against rage and sometimes instigates rage to oppose greed, at the same time, he praises the innate instincts that come out of these qualities.

Intellect is construed as a wise person. Its job is to repel the deception and fraud of Satan and employing its deep insight and clear light [of reason, decency and understanding], annihilate the insinuations of Satan and defeat the lust of swine with the anger of dog because lust ends with anger [against the detrimental ramifications of the lust]. Likewise, intellect should impose the swine over the dog to terminate its bestiality and keep the dog (anger/rage) restrained and obedient through its wisdom and strategy. If it (intellect) does that, the kingdom of body will retain a just and balanced system and organs will continue to perform their intended duties. However, if the wise person (intellect) failed in its efforts and is not able to confront Satan and subjugate the swine and the dog then these three will become dominant over one and will firmly entrap one in their chains in such a way that one shall not be freed despite effort but instead, one will be their servant and obedient for one's entire life. Most people are living their lives in this very imprisonment [far from true liberation and freedom] as their entire struggle is for the lust of stomach and private parts. It is surprising when these people make idolatry a target of their criticism and ridicule it. If thick veils of negligence and heedlessness are lifted from their eyes, then they will witness their own obedience and worship of other than God. Sometimes they are in prostration before the swine and sometimes standing with hands folded and bowing in front of the dog [to pay their obeisance to it]. Fulfilling their desires is their faith and waiting at their beck and call is their action. If realities are embodied in physical form in front of such people, they will witness with their own eyes that there is no difference between them and idolaters. They achieve Satan's approval by worshipping such animals (evil propensities and

demands of the lower self). It is Satan that instigates swine and dog to exact services to themselves out of a human being. Fact of the matter is that people who are at the beck and call of swine and dog are entrapped in Satan's net of deception.

Every slave of God (i.e., human being) should keep a watchful eye on one's movements and stillness, speech, and silence, and keep the inner eye of insight open. If one is able to do that in one's inner states with justice and fairness, one will find out whether one spends one's day in God's obedience or in worshipping the lower self. How great this oppression is that worshippers of lower self, have made a master into a slave and dominant into subjugated! The right of domination and leadership belonged to the intellect, but swine, dog and Satan have snatched that right away from it and made it subjugated and imprisoned. When intellect is deprived of leadership, it brings to fruition the obedience of these three [vile] characteristics and such characteristics get entrenched on the heart whose final end is nothing but destruction and humiliation.

Obedience to the swine of lust and licentiousness leads to shamelessness, vileness, wastefulness, miserliness, ostentation, defamation, immorality, greed, lust, sycophancy, jealousy, enmity, hate and other vile [and negative] characteristics are born out of them [in the human heart and soul]. Obedience to the dog of rage and anger results in excessive acrimony, self-conceitedness, self-righteousness, self-centeredness, arrogance, self-aggrandizement, ridicule, belittling, evil intent and desire for cruelty and other evil characteristics are born out of them. Obeisance to the gods of anger and lust is in fact obedience to Satan resulting in the birth of above mentioned negative and vile inner characteristics and additionally results in fanning of bad inner characteristics of fraud, deception, prevarication, stubbornness, dishonesty, obscenity and various others like them. If the situation is opposite to that and the fountainheads of all of these evils and their causes become subservient to the wisdom and illuminating influence of Divine qualities then the Divine qualities of knowledge, wisdom, certitude, understanding of realities of things, deep insight into matters, prominence over others due to power of foresight and wisdom, right of distinction over others due to perfection of knowledge and other [sublime positive inner] qualities of the heart envelope the heart. It no longer remains necessary to have obedience and subservience to lust and anger but instead, by keeping the swine of lust incarcerated in its limits [of decency and Divine law] results in great inner qualities like innocence, decency, contentment, tranquility, abstinence from worldliness and materialistic greed (*Zuhd*), simplicity, pious awe, reverence and fear of God, inner satisfaction and happiness, modesty and shyness, a beautiful physical and outer appearance, beautiful inner disposition, character and mannerism imbue the heart. Keeping the dog of anger restrained in its chains results in bravery, kindness, greatness [of the spirit], patience, restraining of the lower self [from running amuck and causing harms and hardships to itself and others], forbearance, perseverance and decency in all of one's dealings and similar sublime inner qualities are born in the heart. Heart is like a [polished] mirror [in its original form before it gets covered with dust or tainted with the inner evils and negativities in the soul]. Obedience of anger, lust, and Satan [in the form of evil persuasions it imbues into the heart] have negative impact on the beauty and clarity of this mirror and [consequently] human being cannot clearly see into it one's own image. The praiseworthy beautiful inner qualities [of

the soul] increase the luster and brilliance of this mirror to such an extent that even the Divine beauty [of God] appears in it with its full glory (this is what's referred to as "*Ma'rifa*" or Gnosis of God, the obtainment of which is the real purpose of one's life) and the reality of matter that is sought [in terms of unveiling of Truth and of Eternal verities as the objective of one's inner spiritual struggle]. Following *Hadith* (a prophetic tradition or saying of Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him]) alludes to such a clean, clear, and illuminated heart:

اذا اراد الله لعبد خيرا جعل له واعظا من قلبه

"When God intends good for a servant [of His], He creates an admonisher [to inspire one for right things and good in all matters] in the heart." (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Abu Mansur ad-Daylami* on the authority of the wife of Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] Umm Salama [May God be pleased with her])

Another prophetic narration (*Hadith*) states that the person who has an admonisher in the heart, God appoints a guardian to protect such a heart. Such a heart is the center of God's remembrance and finds tranquility through such Divine remembrance. God says:

أَلَا بِذِكْرِ ٱللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ ٱلْقُلُوبُ

"Verily, hearts find peace and tranquility in the remembrance of God." (Quran, Chapter 13, Verse 28)

Reprehensible and evil morals and manners have an adverse effect on the heart just like smoke and dust cloud out the clarity and brilliance of a mirror. The mirror of the heart darkens with the darkness of sins. This darkness is a type of veil that gets drawn between a servant (i.e., human being) and God. This very veil is referred to as "seal" (*Taba*) and "rust" (*Raan*). Quran says the following about such a heart:

كَلَّا ۖ بَلْ ۜ رَانَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِم مَّا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ

"That's not the reality of matter but [instead,] rust has settled on their hearts due to their [wrong and evil] actions." (Quran, Chapter 83, Verse 14)

أَن لَّوْ نَشَآءُ أَصَبْنَٰهُم بِذُنُوبِهِمْ ۚ وَنَطْبَعُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ

"If We had desired, We would have destroyed them due to their crimes and We have put a seal on their hearts, so they don't listen (comprehend and perceive the reality of matters with their hearts)." (Quran, Chapter 7, Verse 100)

In another verse, not listening [to the truth and advice for one's own well-being] is construed as the sealing of the hearts. In another place, listening has been made conditional to having pious awe, reverence, and fear of God (*Taqwa*). God says:

وَٱتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَ وَٱسْمَعُواْ

"Have pious awe, reverence and fear of God and listen." (Quran, Chapter 5, Verse 108)

وَٱتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَ ۖ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ ٱللَّهُ

"Have pious awe, reverence and fear of God; and He is the One who imparts you knowledge [and teaches you about matters of your own benefit, both material and immaterial, that you were previously not aware of]." (Quran, Chapter 2, Verse 282)

When sins (evil, immoral, detrimental, negative, and self-harm-inflicting actions) increase, heart gets sealed and becomes deprived of comprehending the truth and from the capability of reformation of one's [inner negative] states. Matter of the Hereafter does not remain important to one, worldly pomp and glitter becomes everything to one, one becomes greedy for worldly possessions and wealth and spends all of one's energies in their attainment, exhortations about the Hereafter pass by one's ears like wind without influencing the heart and ability to rectify one's mistakes and repenting from sins is taken away from one.

The darkness of the heart that is mentioned in Qur'an and *Hadith* (prophetic narrations), actually refers to such a state of the heart. Maimoon ibn Muhran (May God have mercy upon him) (a famous sage and saint) said: "When a servant [of God] commits a sin, a black dot appears on one's heart. If one refrains from it [after that] and repents to God with sincere truthful repentance of the heart, then this dot gets erased and heart returns to its condition [it was in prior to committing that sin]. If one returns to that sin or commits other [type of] sins, then both the darkness and size of that dot increases until [a time comes when] this black dot encompasses the entire heart. This very darkness is the rust of the heart [resulting in its sealing that prevents any positivity and illumination from reaching it]". Prophet Muhamad [Peace be upon him] said:

قَلْبُ الْمُؤْمِنِ أَجْرَدُ فِيهِ سِرَاجٌ يَزْهَرُ وَقَلْبُ الْكَافِرِ أَسْوَدُ مَنْكُوسٌ

"A believer's heart is clean [and illumined and enlightened] with a lamp lit up in it [that exudes light through its clarity and brilliance on account of one's spiritual strivings for its transformation towards everything positive] and an unbeliever's heart is dark and turned upside down [on account of one's lack of spiritual strivings and contentment with its negative, downward propensities]." (Narrated by *Hadith* collections *Musnad Ahmad* and *at-Tabarani* on the authority of prophetic companion Abu Saeed [May God be pleased with him]).

Obedience to God [through following the Divine commandments] and opposing the lusts of the lower self (*Nafs*), serve as the polisher of the heart and sins make it (the heart) dark like a dark night. Doing righteous deeds after committing sins does not leave the heart darkened but its light gets reduced just like a mirror exposed to hot breath then cleaned then again exposed to hot breath that blemishes its surface, there will remain

some reduction in its brilliance and the effect of this smear will not be erased completely. Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) mentioned four types of hearts:

القلوب اربعة قلب اجرد فيه سراج يزهر فذالك قلب المؤمن وقلب اسود منكوس فذالك قلب الكافر وقلب اغلف مربوط على غلافه فذالك قلب المنافق وقلب مصفح فيه ايمان ونفاق فمثل الايمان فيه كمثل البقلة يمدها الماء الطيب ومثل النفاق كمثل القرحة يمدها القيح والصديد فاى المادة غلبت عليه حكم لها وفى رواية ذهبت به

"Hearts are of four types: one type of heart is clean [and has clarity and limpidity], there is a lamp lit in it [illuminating and exuding light]. This is the heart of a believer. One type if heart is dark and turned upside down. This is the heart of an unbeliever. One type of heart is enveloped in a covering and its opening is closed. This is the heart of a hypocrite. One type of heart has both faith and hypocrisy coexisting in it. The analogy of faith in such a heart is like greenery [and vegetation] that grows through pure water and analogy of hypocrisy is like a wound that increasingly festers due to secretions and filthy substance in it. Whatever substance dominates will command such a heart." (Narrated by *Hadith* collections *Musnad Ahmad* and *al-Tabarani Sagheer* on the authority of prophetic companion Abu Saeed al-Khudri [May God be pleased with him]).

God says:

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ ٱتَّقَوْا۟ إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَٰٓئِفٌ مِّنَ ٱلشَّيْطَٰنِ تَذَكَّرُوا۟ فَإِذَا هُم مُّبْصِرُونَ

"Verily those who have pious awe, reverence, consciousness and fear of God, when they get a [vile] persuasion from Satan [in their hearts], they engage in God's remembrance and immediately get startled by it [knowing full well that Satan is trying to persuade them to do something evil and they won't allow even a thought of that for a moment in their hearts]." (Qur'an, Chapter 7, Verse 201)

This verse reveals that the life of the heart, wisdom, prudence and [high level of consciousness and] awareness is achieved through the remembrance of God and only those people engage in Divine remembrance who possess the [inner] quality of *Taqwa* (pious awe, reverence, consciousness and fear of God). Divine remembrance leads to spiritual unveilings (*Kashf*) which is a tremendous success and a means of meeting with the Lord (i.e., Gnosis or "*Ma'rifa*", achievement of which is the real purpose of one's life).

Similitude of Heart in Relation with Knowledge – Polished Mirror of the Heart and the Light of Truth Reflecting in it

It should be known that the seat and abode of knowledge is the heart. In other words, it is the Divine spiritual subtlety that runs the system of all organs and faculties. All

organs serve this subtlety and are subservient to it. In relation with real nature of things and knowledge, the similitude of the heart is like a mirror in relation to visible objects or intelligible things. The image of every visible object and appearance is seen in the mirror [of the heart]. In a similar manner, the reality of every known object is imprinted on the heart. Just like a mirror is a separate object, appearances of visible objects are separate objects and their reflection in the mirror is a separate matter, the same differentiation exists for the heart and like the mirror, there are three things pertaining to the heart. First is the heart, secondly the reality or true nature of things, and thirdly the reflection of reality of things appearing in the heart. Heart is the knower; reality and true nature of things enter into it. Known facts are objects, and knowledge is the name of reflection of these known facts in the heart. Just like three things are needed to grab a sword: that which grasps, such as the hand; that which is grasped, such as the sword; and an act of bringing together the sword and the hand by placing the sword in the hand which is called the act of grasping, so also the presence of the image of the intelligible into the heart is called comprehension. Likewise, the reflection of image of the intelligible or known into the heart is called knowledge. Sometimes, realities and facts exist, and heart is also present but there is no acquisition of knowledge and comprehension. This is because knowledge is the name of realities getting into the heart. Just like sword and hand exist separately but there is no grasping or getting hold of since, for it to happen, hand must reach the sword and grasp it. The difference between grasping and knowledge is that in grasping, sword gets into the hand, but the reality does not get into the heart. One person possesses knowledge of fire, but it does not imply that fire itself is present in the heart. Instead, it will be said that the reality of fire is in the heart that resembles its outer existence and appearance. Hence, heart has been compared with the mirror because nothing [physically] enters into it, instead, the reflection or image of an object appears into it in consonance with its real existence.

Resemblance and Similitude of Heart with Mirror: It is better to compare the heart with a mirror. One reason is what has been mentioned above. Second reason is that due to some reasons, image [of an object] does not appear in the mirror. Similarly, under certain circumstances, the mirror of the heart is deprived of the knowledge of realities of things. There are five reasons for images of objects to not reflect in the mirror: first, because of a defect in its formation, for example, it may just be a piece of crude iron [that has not been shaped and polished] or there may be a defect in its substance, or its form may not be right. Second, because of some flaw that may have crept into it or it may have been rusted or its brilliance and clarity may have diminished [due to dust covering its surface]. Third, because it has been turned away or moved to a distance from the direction of the object whose image it should reflect, for example, the object [it should reflect] has been moved behind the mirror. Fourth, a veil or a curtain has been drawn between the mirror and the object. Fifth, due to the ignorance of the direction of the object whose image needs to be seen in the mirror, while the need is to place it in front of the position and direction of the mirror to reflect its image therein.

Such is the state of the mirror of the heart. All matters of truth and realities can be revealed into it. But many hearts do not get these knowledges. There are the same

five reasons for that. First, the heart may be intrinsically defective, for example, the heart of a child does not have the capacity for revelation of these realities. Second, the heart gets soiled and tainted with the muddiness of sins (wrong, negative and reprehensible thoughts, feelings, words and deeds) and with the filth of lusts, consequently losing its clarity, limpidity, purity, and brilliance. Truth does not get revealed in a dark heart. Reality ceases to manifest therein in proportion to its darkness and the filth heaped upon it. A prophetic narration (*Hadith* of Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him]) points to the same reality:

من قارف ذنبا فارقه عقل لا يعود اليه ابدا

"The intellect of a person who sins, separates from one that never returns [and thus one becomes incapable of perceiving the reality of matters]."

It means that there will appear in the heart such muddiness and evil due to sins that will not ever dissipate, and no amends can be made for it. It is right to say that performing righteous and good deeds after committing sins ends the influence of sins on the heart but can the heart return to its same original state it was on before sins? Never so! Reality is that if that person had only done righteous deeds, then the heart would have increased luminosity and limpidity. Loss of increased luminosity is, no doubt, such a loss that cannot be compensated for. When rusted mirror is treated and polished, it regains its brilliance, but can the treated mirror be compared in clarity and brilliance with the mirror that has never been rusted? In any case, obedience to God and opposing the inclinations of lust or of following the base desires of the lower self, results in clarity and limpidity in the heart and removes the murkiness [and repercussions] of sins. God says:

وَٱلَّذِينَ جَٰهَدُوا۟ فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا ۚ

"Those who strive in Our Ways, We will surely and definitely guide them in Our Paths." (Qur'an, Chapter 29, Verse 69)

The Messenger of God, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

من عمل بما علم ورثه الله علم ما لم يعلم

"God endows one who acts upon the knowledge one knows, with the knowledge that one knows not." (This narration is reported in collection of Prophetic traditions *Abu Na'im fil Huliya* on the authority of prophetic companion and helper Anas [May God be pleased with him]).

Third reason is that the heart may be away from facing the sought-after reality, for example, there is a pious and righteous person who is following Divine commandments and because of that, one has a heart that has clarity but truth does not reflect in that heart because one is not a seeker of truth. Such person spends one's entire efforts and energies on bodily acts of worship and accumulating the economic means [for worldly

comforts] and thus, contemplating on God's lordship (*Rububiyyah*), dominion and hidden Divine truths and realities is not something one is accustomed to [or seeking after]. Truth and Divine realities do not appear and reflect in such a heart [as it is not even seeking them and is instead, engaged in other materialistic, worldly, and non-spiritual matters]. Rather, only those matters are revealed to one that one generally contemplates on. For example, if one deliberates on faults and deficiencies of one's actions and deeds and shortcomings of one's lower self then realities related to them are unveiled in one's heart. If one deliberates on the intricacies of economic matters [related to one's livelihood] then these intricacies are unveiled in one's heart. Consider then, if limiting oneself to righteous deeds and bodily acts of worship becomes a veil or obstacle in the way of the unveiling of the glimpse of truth (eternal verities, truths and realities from the spiritual realm) then why the desires and lusts of the lower self and attachment to and entanglements of the world and worldliness would not be a hindrance for the unveiling of realities?

Fourth reason is the veil that becomes an obstacle in the path of unveiling of the truth. For example, sometimes a person controlling one's lusts and passions being an obedient and worshipful servant [of God], is still deprived of comprehension of realities despite deliberations and contemplation. This deprivation is due to some belief that has been ingrained in one's mind from early childhood due to [blind] following of one's ancestors and prevents anything being revealed to one's heart in opposition to strict interpretations of the doctrines which one has blindly accepted. This belief has now become an obdurate stumbling block against every matter that goes against it or is diametrically opposed to it. This is such a veil that overshadows many scholastic theologians, intellectuals, people of knowledge but with religious prejudice and bigotry, and even people of reformation (*Sulaha*) whose thoughts and contemplations are focused on the dominion of the heavens and the earth, are devoid of the comprehension of realities and truth. They are veiled due to their blind following of dogmatic beliefs that have become firmly ingrained in their hearts and minds to such an extent that they lose the capability of accepting anything that is opposed to them [even if it is the truth]. Similarly, these dogmatic beliefs become obstacles and veils in their path of comprehending and perceiving the truth.

Fifth reason is the ignorance of the direction from where the sought-after knowledge can be obtained. It's not possible for a [beginner or novice] student to obtain the knowledge of the unknown without first obtaining the known knowledge related to what is being sought. It is then not sufficient to just have the relevant known knowledge, rather, it needs to be arranged in a special order that is considered reliable by the people of knowledge [so that the logical deduction can happen]. Capturing the sought-after knowledge of the unknown is possible through the net casted over the known knowledge [arranged in a certain way through the process of deduction]. It is necessary for every knowledge to be preceded by two knowledges that are in a certain order and are combined together to result in third knowledge [that was previously unknown] just like a child is born from the combination of male and female. It is also necessary that the knowledges are compatible and closely linked to each other with a natural affinity. Therefore, if someone wants to obtain a foal from the union of horse and camel then

one will be disappointed because for that to happen, male and female horses will be needed and camel cannot fulfil that need [due to being a different species]. Likewise, for every knowledge, there are two special principles and there is a special methodology for their union and only following the correct methodology will result in the desired knowledge. Ignorance of these principles and of the manner of combining them is what hinders knowledge and understanding. Therefore, as mentioned above in the analogy of mirror, the ignorance of the direction of desired object whose image is sought in the mirror, will result in image not getting displayed in the mirror and the objective will not be achieved. For example, if someone wants to see one's neck in the mirror but has placed the mirror in front of one's face, obviously the neck will not be seen in the mirror which is sought; the image of the face, which was not sought, appears in it. Similarly, if mirror is placed behind the neck even then the neck will not be seen, instead the mirror would have disappeared from the sight. To see the neck, a second mirror is needed and should be placed in front of the eyes in such a way that the other mirror [placed behind the neck] will be seen in it. In that case, one can see one's neck because the reflection of the neck will be casted on the first mirror and the reflection of that reflection will fall on the second mirror [in front of the eyes so that the neck will be seen]. Such difficulties are faced in pursuit of knowledge, rather much more complex issues are faced in them. Such people do not exist on the face of the earth who can encounter all such complexities and that's the reason why many of the realities and knowledges do not get perceived. These are a few reasons that become hindrances in the path of comprehending the truth and [eternal spiritual] realities by the hearts, otherwise, every heart [or soul] is intrinsically capable of perceiving realities because of it being a Divine command, being Lordly and noble [due to its Divine origin], and is distinctly distinct from all substances of the universe and beyond [due to its special properties and noble qualities]. The excellence, distinction, and superiority of the heart [or soul] can be judged from below Divine statement:

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا ٱلْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ وَٱلْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَن يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا
ٱلْإِنسَٰنُ ۖ إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا ﴿٧٢﴾

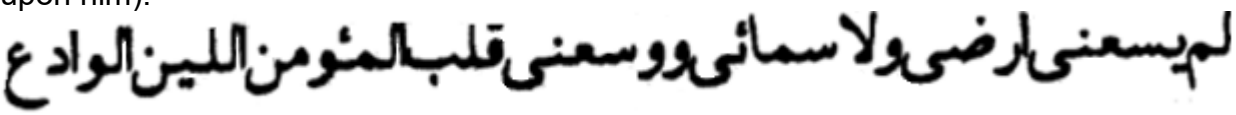
"Verily We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains and they refused to bear it and feared it, but human being undertook to bear it. Indeed, one (human being) was unjust and ignorant." (Qur'an, Chapter 33, Verse 72)

This verse refers to the special characteristic of human being that distinctly distinguishes one from lofty, expansive and strong [Divine] creations like heavens, earth, mountains, and qualified one to bear the trust of God [when all other creations were not deemed fit to do so]. This [Divine] trust is the monotheism or oneness (*Tawheed*) and Gnosis of God (experiential spiritual knowledge or *Ma'rifa*). Every person is innately and intrinsically capable of bearing the weight of this [magnificent Divine] trust but due to aforementioned reasons loses courage for realization of this trust and is no longer able to bear the weight of this trust. In this connection, the Messenger of God, Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing of God be upon him) said:

كل مولود يولد على الفطرة فأبواه يهودانه وينصرانه ويمجسانه

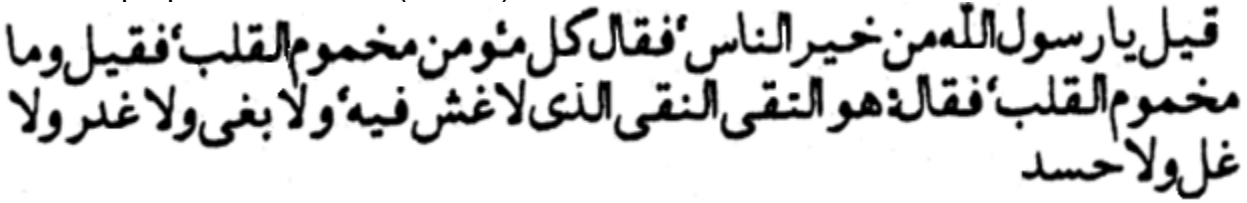
"Every child is born on '*Fitra*' (true innate intrinsic original nature of human being that is in total conformity with the Divine Will, Divine Reality and eternal universal truths and is predisposed towards the trust of God that human being is distinctly endowed with, i.e., monotheism and Divine Gnosis), then one's parents make one Jewish, Christian, or Magian (alluding to variegated religious and ideological traditions that exist in the world thus molding one into the mold of their own religious, ideological, cultural, geographical and intellectual context)." (This narration is reported by collection of prophetic narrations *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of prophetic companion Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him]).

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessing of God be upon him) further said: "Had it not been for the devils hovering over the hearts of children of Adam (i.e., human beings), they would have witnessed the dominion of the Heaven". This is a reference to many of these obstacles that become veils between the heart and the [heavenly] dominion. Someone asked Abdullah bin Umar (May God be pleased with him) [who was a prophetic companion and helper] about God and where He is and whether He is in the Heaven or earth replied: "God is in the hearts of His believing servants". There is a *Hadith* (narration or tradition) of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessing of God be upon him):



"[God said:] Neither My earth nor My heaven could contain Me, but the tender and calm heart of My servant [has the capacity to contain Me]."

Another prophetic narration (*Hadith*) is as follows:



Messenger of God, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessing of God be upon him) was asked: "Who are the best of people?" He replied: "Every believer who is '*Makhmoom al-Qalb*'". He was asked: "What is referred to by '*Makhmoom al-Qalb*'?" He replied: "A heart that is so God-fearing and cleansed [and purified of all inner filth, negativities, and evil] that there is no dirt of falsehood and deception in it, nor treachery or rebellion, nor dishonesty or untrustworthiness, nor rancor or envy [thus the heart is pure and devoid of all evils, negativities and blemishes]."

That's the reason why Umar (May God be pleased with him) said: "Whenever my heart saw God, the veil was lifted because of '*Taqwa*' (piety and pious awe, reverence and fear of God)". For if the veil is lifted for someone between God and one's heart, one witnesses [the splendors of] the visible material world and the heavenly dominion or dominion of the unseen world and one sees the Paradise, the breadth of a part of which is that of the heavens and the earth. As far as the other Paradise is concerned, it is still limited even though it does not fit in the wide expanse of the heavens and the earth due

to being broad in extent and far-reaching in compass. But the paradise witnessed by the heart knows no bounds in its length and breadth, is the paradise of the dominion of the unseen realm of Divine kingdom (*'Alam al-Mulk*) and realm of the angels (*'Alam al-Malakoot*). However, the portion of it that comes into the heart is limited, but if you view it from the viewpoint of Divine knowledge, it is a realm that is infinite and immense. If the two realms of Divine kingdom (*'Alam al-Mulk*) and realm of the angels ('*Alam al-Malakoot)* are mentioned together then they are called the Lordly Presence that encompasses all existing things. This is because the Divine Lordship encompasses all things. Whatever is present besides God are either His actions or dominion or servants. What appears in the human heart from these existences is paradise to some, but for the people of truth, it is not Paradise but instead is a means for deserving it and the extant of human being's dominion in Paradise is proportional to the extent of one's knowledge. In other words, what one knows of God's Attributes and His Actions that was unveiled to one, to that extent the Paradise will be expansive for one. The purpose of acts of obedience and worship is that the surface of the heart becomes purified and cleansed like mirror and there remains no turbidity and filth in it. The purpose of purification of the heart is that the light of faith and the shine of [the illumination of] Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*) permeates it. The following two verses refer to the same light of faith and illumination and enlightenment of Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*):

فَمَن يُرِدِ ٱللَّهُ أَن يَهۡدِيَهُۥ يَشۡرَحۡ صَدۡرَهُۥ لِلۡإِسۡلَٰمِۖ

"Whomsoever God wishes to guide, He expands one's heart to *Islam* (in the true meaning of the term, it refers to submission to the Will of God and purity and illumination of the soul that true light of faith and Divine Gnosis brings into it)." (Qur'an, Chapter 6, Verse 125)

أَفَمَن شَرَحَ ٱللَّهُ صَدۡرَهُۥ لِلۡإِسۡلَٰمِ فَهُوَ عَلَىٰ نُورٖ مِّن رَّبِّهِۦۚ

"One whose heart God has opened and expanded wide with willingness towards self-surrender unto Him, such a one is illumined by a light [that flows] from one's Sustainer (i.e., God) [Can such a one be likened to the blind and deaf of the heart?]" (Qur'an, Chapter 39, Verse 22)

Degrees of Illumination and Faith: This illumination and faith [and certitude in God] has three degrees: The first degree is the faith of laymen which is purely blind imitation. The second degree is the faith of scholastic theologians that is mingled with logical reasoning. The third degree is the faith of the Gnostics, which is seeing clearly with the light of certainty [and certitude of faith].

An example is being cited [here] to clarify these degrees [of faith]. The example is that the ascertainment of Zaid's presence in the house can be done through three methods. One [method] is that you receive the news of his presence through a trustworthy person who has not been attributed to falsehood and lying. You become satisfied with news brought by such a person and develop this certitude that Zaid is indeed in the house. This is an example of the faith of laymen or ordinary folks which is based on [mere blind] following. Such is the state of laymen that when a child attains discernment [and

is able to understand life on one's own] accepts what one hears, without any hesitation, from one's parents and teachers, about God's existence, knowledge, power and other Divine attributes like these, the mission of Prophets and Divine commandments they brought. Such beliefs become ingrained and [deeply] rooted in their minds that anything opposed to them do not even cross their minds. This is because they have a good opinion about the veracity of their parents and teachers and have no hesitation accepting and believing any news [or information] from them. Such a faith is a cause of salvation in the Hereafter but such believers stay in the degree and category] of "people of the right hand" ("*Ashab al-Yameen*" or ordinary pious and righteous people entitled to attain Divine acceptance) and they are not included among the intimates of God (*Muqarrabeen*) [who have the highest degree is spiritual perfection, attainment and rank before God] because for intimacy with the Divine (*Taqarrub*), it is necessary that the heart is illumined with mystical unveiling, deep inner spiritual insight and expansion of the heart by the light of certitude. These [noble] characteristics are not found in faith based on blind following besides having the possibility of errors in what is remembered from hearing from individuals [in that which pertains to doctrine].

The second method of acquiring knowledge of Zaid's presence in the house is that you yourself listen to his voice with your ears while he is in the house and you are outside the boundary wall of the house. Listening to his voice will cause more ascertainment [of Zaid's presence in the house] compared to someone [reliable and trustworthy] telling you about it because the voice argues for the appearance and form and it occurs to the heart that the voice belongs to a specific person. Although this faith is mingled with love and proof but the possibility of error is still there [in this type of faith] as voices sometimes resemble each other and sometimes one person can imitate the voice of another person out of pretense, and the listener is not able to distinguish between the two voices and can get deceived, for one had no thought of any such thing [that one would do such a thing and the purpose of such imitation].

The third method [of developing certainty, for instance, of Zaid's presence in the house] is to go inside the house and see Zaid for yourself. This is real Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*) or real experiential knowledge and observation with certitude. This Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*) or experiential knowledge resembles the one of the intimates and friends of God (*Muqarrabeen*) and saints or people of truth (*Siddiqee*n) because they believe after [personal] observation. In this way, their faith is inclusive of the faith of the laymen and scholastic theologians (*Mutakallemeen*) but due to increase in observation, the faith strengthens to such an extent that no possibility of error remains. However, the Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*) or spiritual experiential knowledge of all friends of God (*Muqarrabeen*) and saints or people of truth (*Siddiqeen*) is not at the same level but instead there are differences in degrees [of their closeness, intimacy, spiritual unveiling and certitude with God]. The explanation of these differences in degrees and ranks can again be taken from Zaid's example. One person sees Zaid well in the courtyard of the house closely in daylight. A second person sees him inside a room or from a distance or in the evening when daylight has receded. First person's observation is more perfect than that of the second person even though the perception of the second person is still correct, but one does not observe the minute details and hidden features of his facial

characteristics. The variance in degrees of seeing Divinely revealed truths and [spiritual] knowledge is of this kind. The difference in the attainment of [spiritual] knowledge is as though one sees Zaid, Amr, and Bakr and while another sees Zaid only. The knowledge of the former is definitely greater than that of the latter [because of the abundance of things known to the former and such is the state of the hearts in relation to the spiritual experiential knowledge].

Difference between Learning (*Ta'allum*) and Spiritual Inspiration (*Ilham*) - Reality of Difference between Scholastic Theologians and Travelers of the Spiritual Path:

The advent of non-conventional knowledge into the heart happens in different ways. Sometimes this knowledge gathers in the heart as if they have been imperceptibly put into it and sometimes, they are acquired through arguments and learning. The former knowledge is called "spiritual awakening or inspiration" (*Ilham*) and latter is called "acquired knowledge". Former knowledge is of two types: First is that the recipient does not know the source of this knowledge and it's referred to as spiritual awakening or inspiration (*Ilham*) or "endowment to the heart" (*Nufikha fil Qalb*). Second is that the medium through which this knowledge gets conveyed is known, in other words, the angel who puts that knowledge in the heart is seen and it is referred to as the "Divine revelation" (*Wahi*). First is associated with saints and Gnostics and second is associated with the prophets, and knowledge acquired through learning and proofs is peculiar to the scholars.

Reality is that the human being's heart possesses ability to have realities of things clarified in it. If hearts lose this capability, it is due to the same five causes mentioned before. These causes become veils between the mirror of the heart and the "Preserved Tablet" (*Loh Mahfoodh*) that has all matters inscribed in it that have been decided from eternity. The appearance of truth in the mirror of the heart from the mirror of the preserved tablet is like the image from one mirror appearing into another. Deprivation of hearts from these realities due to such hindrances is like veil coming in between two mirrors. Just like the veil can be removed with something like a hand, the veil in between the Preserved Tablet (*Loh Mahfoodh*) and mirror of the heart gets removed by Divine breeze of mercy and those realities start appearing in it that are in the Preserved Tablet (*Loh Mahfoodh*).

This happens sometimes in dreams and future events come before one. The complete removal of the veil happens at death. Death is such a reality that all hidden matters get clarified with it and all obstacles to perceiving realities are removed. Consequently, the illuminations of intricacies of knowledge appear from the unseen realm; sometimes like a bolt of lightning for a few moments and sometimes continuously and permanently but that rarely happens. There is no difference between learning (*Ta'allum*) and spiritual awakening or inspiration (*Ilham*) in terms of knowledge and place where knowledge resides (i.e., the heart). If there is a difference then it is just that the veil is lifted in spiritual awakening or inspiration (*Ilham*) and in learning, means of acquisition [of knowledge] need to be employed and lifting of veil in not in one's control. Likewise, the

only difference between Divine revelation (*Wahi*) and spiritual awakening or inspiration (*Ilham*) is that the bestower of inspiration is not seen in the latter and could be seen in Divine revelation. Whether knowledge is acquired through Divine revelation (*Wahi*) or spiritual awakening or inspiration (*Ilham*), in all cases is achieved through angels. God says:

وَمَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ أَن يُكَلِّمَهُ ٱللَّهُ إِلَّا وَحْيًا أَوْ مِن وَرَآيِٕ حِجَابٍ أَوْ يُرْسِلَ رَسُولًا فَيُوحِيَ بِإِذْنِهِۦ مَا يَشَآءُ

"No human being has such a status that God would talk to one [directly] but [with three ways,] either through spiritual awakening or inspiration (*Ilham*) or from behind a veil or by sending an angel who conveys a message as He wills or wants." (Qur'an, Chapter 42, Verse 51)

It is necessary to explain here that *Sufis* (travelers and strivers on the spiritual path for self-reformation leading to realization of God) are inclined towards knowledges connected to spiritual awakening or inspiration (*Ilham*). That's the reason they do not invest time in conventional learning, nor do they read books of authors, or argue with sayings and proofs, instead they say that one should strive spiritually, [thus] obliterating all negative and vile (negative, low and reprehensible) inner qualities; after putting an end to all such obstacles [on the spiritual path], one should focus one's complete attention to God. When this has been achieved, God Himself becomes a protector of the heart and provider of the illumination of [spiritual] knowledge. The shade of Divine mercy will be on one, light will illumine one's heart and expansion of the heart [to achieve spiritual illuminations] will be achieved and the veil on the mirror of the heart will dissipate and images of the realities of Divine matters will fell on it. A servant [of God, i.e., an ordinary person] has only the responsibility of purification of the heart [from all inner ills, negative thoughts and vile tendencies] in order to develop the ability to accept the truth. Firm determination and seeking the truth will keep one's courage collected, awaiting the fulfillment through Divine mercy. Matters that are unveiled before the prophets and saints and consequent inner illumination they receive, are not due to their indulgence in teaching, learning, and studying books but instead, they have detachment from the world (*Zuhd*), they remove the sources of evil thoughts, and its reason is that they adopt *Zuhd* (detachment from worldliness) and with full determination, courage and intention, focus their attention on God alone. Whoever becomes a person of God, God becomes his or hers.

There is a saying among *Sufis* that to become a person of God, one needs to get completely disconnected from worldly impediments [in the spiritual path] then one should empty out the heart [so that it becomes available for spiritual struggle] and divert one's attention from relatives, children, properties, country, knowledge, fame and power and instill such a state in the heart so that the presence or absence of a thing becomes equal, seclude oneself, rely only on required and necessary things and litanies, empty out the heart of everything but God to such an extent that even contemplating the meanings of Qur'an and books of *Hadith* (prophetic narrations) does not perturb the focus of the heart. Rather, one should try that nothing comes to one's heart other than God. When the only statement on one's tongue remains "*Allah, Allah*" ("*Allah*" is the one and only personal name of God irrespective of languages, while "God" is an English language-specific general term for alluding to the Being who is the Creator, Sustainer

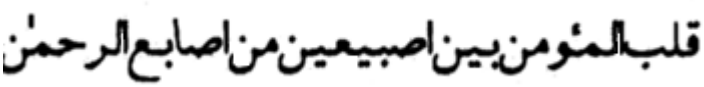
and Provider of everything that exists as every language has its own general terminology for "God") in both private and public, while this statement is uttered with complete presence of the heart and in such abundance that even if the tongue does not move, the heart is seen to be reciting it, that's when a [inner spiritual] state is reached where the effect of this statement is erased from the tongue and heart [instead] becomes [firmly and permanently] established in its [Divine] remembrance to such an extent, that even from the heart, the shape of the letters and word disappears and the meanings stay there permanently at all times, as if the heart and the meanings become mutually essential for each other. A slave [of God, i.e., a human being,] has the potential and prerogative to reach such a level [of spiritual transformation]. One also has the potential that in order to make this [inner spiritual] state permanent, one can repel the thoughts and prompting of things other than God. However, one does not have control over the pull and absorption of the Divine Grace and Mercy, but the capability develops in one to attract the Divine Grace to oneself. After reaching this level [of spiritual attainment], a slave [of God} should await the openings of Divine Grace, that just like these openings were bestowed on prophets and saints, they will be bestowed on one as well. In this case, if one has true intention, correct resolve, beauty of perseverance, refrain from lusts and desires [from the lower self], and nothing from the worldly attachments and worries passed through one's heart then the light of truth will start to shine in the heart - initially like lightening for a few moments then the same way again. At times there will be delays but no need to be disappointed because of them. Slowly and gradually, these [inner spiritual] lights will start to stay in the heart. Sometimes the time they stayed for will be so short that one feels the thirst for them. Sometimes they will stay longer; sometimes the lights [of spiritual illumination] will shine on the heart one after another. In regard to this, the Gnostics have so many differing degrees and levels that they cannot even be imagined, just like the difference between creations and their character traits (*Ikhlaq*) is hard to imagine.

The upshot of this discussion is that bringing heart to life and purifying it [from all turbidity, muddiness, and negativities] is the responsibility of the servant (i.e., each and every individual). Increasing its capacity and patiently working on it are also among individual obligations. Religious scholars of the outer teachings (*'Ulema al-Zahir*) do not refute it either because most prophets, saints and Gnostics possess the same spiritual states. But they deem this path and method as difficult. In their opinion, there is a long wait for results and fruits following this path. The conditions set in this path are not easy to adhere to. Firstly, to be oblivious of all worldly responsibilities, attachments and problems is difficult. Even if it happens through spiritual rigors and disciplining, it may not last for long because small misgivings and [satanic] persuasions in the heart ruin its peace and tranquility. Prophet Muhammad [Peace and blessings of God be upon him] said:

قلب المؤمن اشد قدرا في غلياتها

"Heart of a believer boils even more than the boiling of a [cooking] pot (i.e., heart is constantly in a state of flux and is liable to change)". (This narration is reported by collection of prophetic narrations *Musnad Ahmed* and *Hakim* on the authority of prophetic companion Miqdad bin al-Aswad [May God be pleased with him]).

The prophet has also said:



"The heart of a believer remains in between the two fingers among the fingers of the Most Merciful (i.e., God controls the state of the heart at all times and can change it anytime as He wills)". (This narration is reported by prophetic companion Abdullah bin Umar [May God be pleased with him]).

During this spiritual struggle, temperament becomes unpleasant, intelligence recedes, health declines and various types of bodily illnesses creep in. If knowledge is not sought first before the spiritual rigors for purification of the [lower] self, heart gets filled with numerous types of evil and negative thoughts and the self is entangled in them for the entire lifetime that is passed without any success [in the spiritual path]. Many *Sufis* (the strivers in the spiritual path) have adopted this path and later on remained entangled in any one [evil, negative or destructive] thought that even after twenty years are gone by without moving even one step forward [in the spiritual path]. At that point, they realize that if they had acquired knowledge, twenty years would not have gone wasted and the repercussions of that thought [responsible for this dismal state of spiritual progress] would have been revealed on the very first day because of acquired knowledge. This shows that setting foot in the valley of spiritual striving through the way of knowledge is not only reliable but also close to its objectives. Scholars of the outward knowledge (scholastic theologians) are of the opinion that the similitude of *Sufis* is like the persons who do not learn the *Fiqh* (knowledge of the external, visible and bodily acts of worship) and claim that the Prophet (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) did not acquire this outer knowledge becoming a *Faqih* (scholar and practitioner of outer religious knowledge) through Divine revelation and inspiration, hence they (i.e., *Sufis*) will also become like that through persistence and perpetuity in spiritual exercises and through the same source [of Divine revelation and inspiration], they will also acquire the same outer knowledge (*Fiqh*). A person entangled in the same type of preposterous and vile thoughts is being oppressive to one's own self and is busy wasting precious moments of one's life. Such a *Sufi* (i.e., someone who is not a real *Sufi* but only a self -delusional person falsely thinking that one is striving on the spiritual path) is like a person who neither tills the land [to grow crops] nor touch any type of work [or profession to earn a livelihood] and still has the hope that one will gain treasure; such an outcome is only probable but not necessary as chances of success are very low. Upshot is that a *Sufi* (an aspirant of travelling on the spiritual path) should first acquire knowledge and understand the real meanings of the sayings of the scholars then [they are justified to] wait for the [inner spiritual] knowledge that scholars of the outward teachings of religion (scholastic theologians) are devoid of. It is no surprise that such knowledge unveils after [sustained and persistent] spiritual strivings and rigors [after acquiring and sincerely acting on the knowledge of outer acts of worship and Divine obedience].

Explanation of Difference between Revealed and Acquired Knowledge with Familiar Examples

Perceiving wonders and mysteries of the heart is outside the scope of [human] senses. Even the heart is not something to be perceived through senses. Furthermore, something not perceived through senses cannot be comprehended through intellects that are intrinsically weak, as intellects are ill-equipped to do so unless an example is cited from the realm of the senses. To explain it to ordinary people, examples are being provided here from the realm of senses.

First Example: Suppose a water reservoir has been dug in a land. There are two ways of channeling water into it. One method is to make water channels all around it and open water gates [from sources of water] to these channels so that water accumulates in the reservoir. Second way is to dig the shallow part of the reservoir so deep that the water itself gushes forth from it. Water acquired from second method would be purer, longer lasting and could be abundant and copious. In the light of this example, heart should be construed as a water reservoir, knowledge as water and five senses as the water channels. Heart's access to knowledge can be through the five senses so that whatever observations one has, come into the heart that gets filled with knowledge. Second method is to close these water channels through seclusion so that the five senses are not used for knowledge acquisition and the water reservoir of the heart is dug deeper to such an extent that the fountains of knowledge start to emanate from within. This can only happen when heart is meticulously purified and cleansed, and the veils are lifted from it [to unveil the spiritual realities].

Regarding the question, "How would knowledge emanate from the heart when it doesn't even exist therein?", its answer belongs to the wonders and mysteries of the heart. From the perspective of outward knowledge, only this much can be said in response to this question that realities of things [from the realm of the seen] are ingrained on the Preserved Tablet (*Loh Mahfoodh*), rather on the hearts of the angels that are close [to the Divine Reality]. Just like before constructing a house, an engineer prepares its blueprint and detailed design and builds the house accordingly, likewise the Creator of the heavens and the earth has also prepared a blueprint and detailed design of everything that comes into existence from the beginning to the endless eternity. This master plan is preserved in the Preserved Tablet (*Loh Mahfoodh*). Whatever is happening in the world is happening according to it. It's not far-fetched for this master plan to reflect on some heart. Therefore, when something once comes into existence that later on ceases to exist, but still through perception and imagination its form and appearance can be imagined. For example, if one closes one's eyes after looking at the visible realm then the form and appearance of earth and sky will be in one's perception and imagination and it will be felt like one is looking at them. If suppose the heaven and the earth cease to exist and only the person who has seen them remains, one will not be deprived of their picture in one's imagination and thought. This thought will continue to influence the heart and realities of things will continue to appear in the heart that were present in thought and perception [at some time before]. Whatever comes into the heart is in accordance with the imaginary form and appearance that resembles the real

outward form and appearance of that object that is in accordance with the map present in the Preserved Tablet (*Loh Mahfoodh*).

Types of Existence: It is learned from above that there are four levels of existence. First [level of] existence is the one that is in the Preserved Tablet (*Loh Mahfoodh*). This existence is superior to physical existence. Second level of existence is the real existence - one that is in this [worldly] life. Third level of existence is imaginary - one that is in thoughts and perceptions. It refers to the existence whose appearance and form appears in thought and imagination after real existence. Fourth level of existence is the intellectual existence, which is the appearance and form that comes into the heart after imaginary existence. Of these four existences, some are spiritual, and some are physical. There are also variations within spiritual existences as some are more spiritual than others. All these matters are wonders and mysteries of God's wisdom. See that God has created the eye so small but despite its small size it can collect the vast expanse of the heavens and the earth in it. It is a rule that unless a matter reaches one, one is not aware of it. Therefore, if God had not created the example, form and appearance of the creations of the world, you would not have been aware of them or had knowledge of them. This is a small sample of your Lord's perfection of power and absolute mastery over all things that He has imparted vast treasures of these wonders in the eyes and hearts. In order to get admonition, some hearts have been made devoid of insight and some eyes devoid of vision to such as extent that some hearts are so oblivious that they do not know the faults of their own [inner] self, or get the news of the wonders and mysteries [from the spiritual realm] that the heart must possess, nor do they know about these or are aware of these mysteries.

We now return to our main objective here after these opening remarks. What was discussed here is that the existence of something in the heart could be by means of senses and also due to the Preserved Tablet (*Loh Mahfoodh*). Just like the form of the sun sometimes comes into the eyes by looking at it and sometimes by seeing its reflection in water and that reflection resembles the actual sun, likewise when veils are lifted between the heart and the Preserved Tablet (*Loh Mahfoodh*), realities of matters start to reflect in it and their knowledge comes into the heart. In that case, heart is no longer in need of deducing [knowledge] and benefiting from the senses. The advent [and dawning] of knowledge by this method is similar to water emanating from earth [from a fountainhead] filling up the water reservoir. Sometimes, heart is busy with such thoughts that it acquires through senses. These thoughts become impediments for the Preserved Tablet (*Loh Mahfoodh*), hence if such thoughts fill the water reserve and fill up its lower part, it does not get removed from its bottom.

Two Doors of the Heart: Heart has two doors. One door opens towards the angelic realm (*'Alam al-Malakoot*) and the second one towards the five senses that acquire news from the material realm or realm of the visible (*'Alam al-Mulk wa as-Shahada* also known as realm of the appearance of Divine Omnipotence and Power). Both realms have a close relationship. As far as opening the door towards the five senses is concerned it is well known, however, opening the door towards the angelic realm (*'Alam al-Malakoot*) or the Preserved Tablet (*Loh Mahfoodh*) is not implausible. Look at the

state of dream and how one witnesses the wonders in that state. Some people see the future events and past happenings in dreams, although senses are not involved in dreams, but this door is opened only for those who are unique in their Divine remembrance. It means that they are engrossed and absorbed in the remembrance of God in such a way that no concern is left with [anything or anyone] other than God. In one prophetic tradition, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessing of God be upon him) said:

سبق المفردون' قيل ومن هم المفردون يا رسول الله' قال المتنزهون
بذكر الله تعالى' وضع الذكر عنهم اوزارهم فوردوا القيامة خفافا

"The single-minded people (*Mufarridoon*) have excelled and advanced [compared to everyone else in the spiritual path to God]". Prophet was asked: "O Messenger of God! Who are the single-minded people?" He replied: "Those people who became purified through [inner spiritual purification by means of God's sincere and devout] remembrance (*Dhikr*). God's remembrance has lightened up the weight of their sins and on the Day of Judgment, they will come light-weighted [as the weight of the burdens of wrongdoings would have been removed from them]." (This narration is reported by *Hadith* collections *Sahih Muslim* and *Hakim* on the authority of prophetic companion Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him])

After this, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessing of God be upon him) stated the following from God (*Hadith Qudsi*): "I turn My Face towards them; do you know whom I turn My Face towards and what I want to grant them? My first bestowal to them is that I put My Light into their hearts then they start to give news about Me as I know about their states". This news enters from the same inner door [of the heart facing the unseen realm of the appearance of Divine Omnipotence and Power] that was just mentioned. The difference between the knowledge of prophets and saints on one hand and scholars and wise on the other, is that the prophetic knowledge comes from the door that opens into the heart that is facing the angelic realm (*'Alam al-Malakoot*) and knowledge of wisdom enters through the doors of the senses that is opened towards the material realm (*'Alam Zahir*). Through this example, the difference between the two realms has been made clear. As far the mysteries and wonders of the realm of the unseen (*'Alam al-Ghaib wa as-Shahada* also known as unseen realm of the appearance of Divine Omnipotence and Power) are concerned, they are so many that they cannot even be estimated in the circle of human estimation.

Second Example: Through this example, I would like to clearly articulate the difference between the knowledge of scholars and that of the Gnostics (or saints or intimates of God also known as *Awliya*). Scholars strive to acquire the entity of knowledge and try to pull it towards their hearts and *Awliya* (Gnostics, saints or intimates of God) busy themselves with the purification, reformation, polishing and vivification of the heart. As a tradition goes, Romans and Chinese lavishly praised their construction and artistic abilities and each group claimed to excel the other in front of a king. The king thought of giving experts from both groups an opportunity to display their talents. It was decided that both will be given a part of a building to express their artistic abilities. On one part,

Chinese will perform the artwork and Romans on the other. In between the two parts would be a curtain so that each group is unaware of the work of the other. Both were given this task. Romans brought in innumerable wondrous colors while the Chinese entered their part of the building without any colors and started to polish the part handed over to them. When Romans announced the completion of their work, Chinese also came out saying their work has completed as well. The king was surprised at the type of artwork [of the Chinese] that did not need any colors or paints. They requested the king to order the lifting of curtains in between the two parts of the building. When curtains were lifted, the brilliance of colors in the Roman artwork started to shine and their luster and brilliance increased manifold because the Chinese polished the walls of their part of building so much that the walls became beautifully polished like a clean polished mirror [that reflected the beauty of the Roman artwork]. This is the state of *Awliya* (saints, Gnostics and intimates of God) that they, like Chinese [in this parable], put in so much effort in purification, revivification and reformation [from all negativities, vile and evil tendencies, propensities and inclinations] of the heart that it gets illumined with [a Divine Light of] truth while the scholars and wise are more focused on acquiring knowledge and impressions through conventional means of learning.

Whatever be the means of acquiring knowledge, there is no extinction for the heart that has the light of [Divine] knowledge [as the heart is immortalized by it]. Knowledge does not end with death nor does death have an impact on the purity and limpidity of the heart nor is there any turbidity entering into it. Therefore, Hasan al-Basri (May God have mercy upon him) [who was one of the greatest *Awliya* and Gnostics] said that the abode of faith (i.e., the heart) is not consumed by the soil (i.e., the life of the heart having faith in the Divine Reality, does not end with death). Knowledge, the ability and capacity to accept it, and purity and limpidity of the heart are necessary for a believer (*Momin*). Eternal happiness and endless success (*Sa'adah*) in the afterlife cannot even be imagined without it. Also, this eternal happiness and endless success has differing degrees. Just like every possessor of wealth is called wealthy, every possessor of *Sa'adah* (eternal happiness and endless success) is called "*Sa'eed*" (possessor of tremendous bounty of eternal happiness and endless success). However, can the possessor of one hundred thousand *Dirhams* (an old currency of the past in the form of gold coins) be equal to the one who has one million *Dirhams*? This is the same for eternal happiness and endless success [as all possessors of this tremendous bounty don't have the same degree of it]. Some are at a supreme degree of it, some less than that and some on the lower degree of it. These degrees of eternal happiness are due to varying degrees of Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*) and faith (*Iman*).

Abu Suleiman al-Darani (a great Gnostic of the past) said: "Similitude of the heart is like that of a dome that has many closed doors around it. The door that opens up among them, heart works through that". We know through this that among the doors of the heart, one of its doors open up towards angelic realm (*'Alam al-Malakoot*) and the higher spiritual realm. This door does not open up without a vigorous and sustained spiritual struggle, God-fear and abstaining from lusts and indulgences of the lower self. That's why, Umar (May God be pleased with him) instructed his commanders in a letter that they should remember whatever they are told by God's pious slaves because

matters pertaining to higher [universal eternal] truths are revealed to them. Some scholars say that that the hand of God is on the mouths of the wise [people of spiritual wisdom] and they utter only the truth. One Gnostic said that he can claim that God reveals some secrets to those who adopt humility before Him.

Satan's Domination of Hearts Through Insinuations (*Waswaas*) - Meaning of Insinuations and Reasons for Satan's Domination

Heart has just been resembled to a dome that has many doors and through every door inner states continuously come and go. There are many examples of that. For example, heart is like a target that is being continually targeted by arrows from all sides or it is like a mirror in which different images are reflected one after another and no moment goes by idle or it is like a water reservoir that receives water from various connecting water channels built around it. Continual appearance of differing impacts on the heart happens through both the external as well as the internal senses. That's why thoughts, lusts, angers and other [inner] character traits are names of these same impacts and states. Unceasing changes in the heart take place all the time. If an object is perceived through the senses, then its impact will be seen on the heart. Likewise, if abundance of food and force of temperament instigate lust then heart will be impacted. Thoughts of the heart keep changing and it keeps moving from one thought to another. This is the meaning of changing of the heart. The impact born in the heart as a result of deliberations and remembrances are called "dangers" (*Khawatir*). Knowledges perceived by the heart are being referred to by 'deliberations' and 'remembrances', whether they are new or known from before and are being mentioned now. [Perceived] Dangers (*Khawatir*) are referred to as such because they get imposed on the heart when human being is negligent of them. These dangers instigate intentions and [human] resolves because the intention, determination and plan of action is born only after the thought has crossed the heart. Actions are born out of and started by these dangers (*Khawatir*). Danger instigates desire, desire instigates resolve, resolve instigates intention or plan of action, and intention instigates the bodily limbs [to act according to the thought or perceived danger in the heart].

Two Types of Dangers - Divine Inspiration (*Ilham*) and Insinuations (*Waswaas*):
Dangers that instigate desire are of two types. First danger is such that it invites one to a matter that is evil (*Shar*) or in other words harmful for life's final outcome and eternal life (*'Aaqiba*). Second danger is such that it invites one to a matter that is good and noble (*Khair*) that is a source of benefit and goodness in the afterlife. In this way there are two different dangers (*Khawatir*) and they both have different names. The good danger (*Khatir Mahmuda*) is called "Divine Inspiration" (*Ilham*) and condemnable danger (*Khatir Madhmuma*) is called "insinuation" (*Waswasa*). These dangers are fleeting or

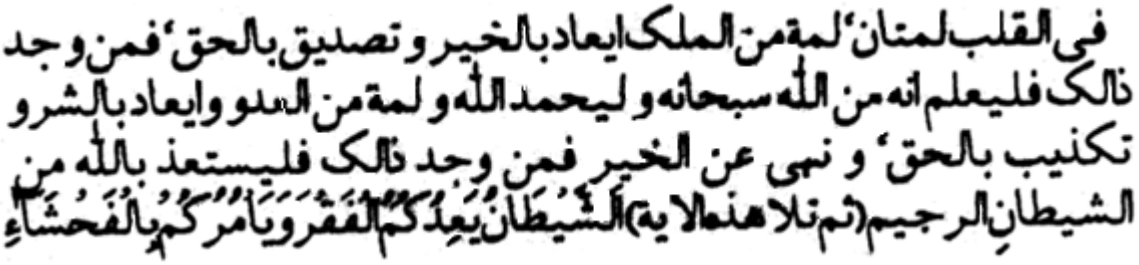
contingent (*Hawadith*) and for them a creator (contingent being or *Haadith*) is essential. Since dangers are of different types, their differences tell us that their causes and sources would be different too. Divine Wisdom and way (*Sunnah*) of God unceasingly permeates and continues in the order of causes and effects. Just as the cause is, the effect would be like it. Therefore, if a fire is lit in a room and through its light, walls of the room get illumined and ceiling gets blackened with smoke, the blackness of the ceiling will not be attributed to the light. Likewise, there are differing causes for the darkness and illumination of the heart. The cause of [second] danger is called "angel" who is the inviter of good and the cause of [first] danger is called "Satan" who is the inviter of evil. The subtlety and humility that creates ability in the heart to accept good is called "*Tawfeeq*" (Divine enablement to do good) and the one that enables one to accept satanic insinuations is called "*Khadhlan*" (depths of misfortune and sinking to lows in a downward spiritual trajectory). Difference of meanings leads to different terminologies.

Angel and Satan: "Angel" refers to the creation that God has created to spread good, light of knowledge, revealing the truth, promising good, and commanding good and noble. Angel is captivated [in God's hand] for these appointed tasks. "Satan" (*Shaytan*) refers to the creation who is a direct opposite of an angel in all the above-mentioned things. In other words, Satan has been created to promise evil, invite to bad and evil, and make one fearful who is inclined towards doing good. It is learned from this that insinuation (*Waswasa*) is in contrast to Divine inspiration (*Ilham*), Satan is in contrast to angel, and depths of misfortune and sinking to lows in a downward spiritual trajectory (*Khadhlan*) is in contrast to Divine enablement to do good (*Tawfeeq*). Following verse refers to the same:

وَمِن كُلِّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَا زَوْجَيْنِ

"And We have created everything in pairs of two." (Qur'an, Chapter 51, Verse 49)

It means all creations are in pairs except for the Lord Mighty Majestic who is one and unique, no one is competing against Him, He is the truth and is the Creator of all pairs. Both angel and Satan are busy pulling the heart towards themselves. Therefore, according to a tradition, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:


في القلب لمتان لمة من الملك ايعاد بالخير و تصديق بالحق فمن وجد
ذالک فليعلم انه من الله سبحانه و ليحمد الله و لمة من العدو وايعاد بالشر و
تكذيب بالحق و نهى عن الخير فمن وجد ذالک فليستعذ بالله من
الشيطان الرجيم (ثم تلا هذه الاية) الشيطان يعدكم الفقر ويامركم بالفحشاء

"'In the heart there are two closenesses: one is the closeness to the angel whose job is

to promise good and ascertain the truth; anyone who knows this should know that this is from God and be grateful to God for this. Second closeness [of the heart] is that of Satan whose job is to reject the truth and prohibit one from good; anyone who knows this should seek God's refuge from Satan, the accursed'. After this, the Prophet recited the following verse: 'And Satan makes you afraid of poverty and commands you to committ evil and shameful [and licentious] deeds'". (This narration is reported by *Hadith* collections *Tirmidhi* and *Nasa'i* on the authority of prophetic companion Abdullah ibn Mas'ud [May God be pleased with him]).

Hasan al-Basri (a great Gnostic) said that two thoughts [of intention and resolve] revolve around the heart. One is from God and one from the enemy. May God have mercy on the one who pauses at one's thought. If it is from God then one should act on it and if it is from the enemy (i.e., Satan) then one should wage a struggle against it. [Following] *Hadith* (Prophetic tradition) points to the the struggle between these [competing and opposing] thoughts:

قلب المؤمن بين اصبعين من اصابع الرحمٰن

"The heart of a believer is in between the two fingers from the fingers of the Merciful [God]".

God is exalted above having fingers made of flesh, blood and bones. Instead the fingers here refer to the fact that just as a human being works fast through one's fingers and turn things around and moves [objects] with them, likewise God also uses angel and Satan to do [their respective] work after subjugating them. Both of them (angel and Satan) are subjugated to turn the hearts and flip them around just like your fingers are subjugated [to your will] to move and flip objects around. Heart, in its inherent nature, is capable of equally accepting the influences of both the angel and Satan and one does have preference over the other. However, the following of desires from the lower self or opposing them gives preference to one side (angel or Satan) over the other. Therefore, if human being acts upon the implications of anger and lust, Satan will predominate one through the means of desires from the lower self and heart will be its nest, incubator and supporter. This is because the desires of the lower self are grazing pastures of Satan. If one wages a valiant struggle against desires and not let them dominate one and adopts the character traits of angels, the heart of such a one will become the resting place and destination of angels. The heart that inhabits lust, anger, greed, avarice and prolonged [unrelenting] desires, that heart will be a target of Satanic insinuations in all circumstances. A prophetic narration states:

ما منكم من احد الا وله شيطان' قالوا وانت يارسول الله؟ قال وانا الا ان الله اعاننى عليه فاسلم فلا يامرالا بخير

"'A devil (*Shaytan*) is appointed on each one of you'. The prophetic companions asked:

'And on you as well?' Prophet (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) replied: 'Yes, on me as well. However, God has helped me against him and he has become a *Muslim* (subservient to the Divine Will and Command). He says nothing to me other than good'". (This narration is reported by *Hadith* collection *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of prophetic companion Abdullah ibn Mas'ud [May God be pleased with him]).

Satan uses lust as its tool of control and manipulation. The person who is Divinely helped with one's lust so that it becomes subservient to one to such an extent that it does not resurface except for within suitable limits, then it does not remain a caller to evil and neither does Satan has his way of using it for his own [nefarious] purposes. Satan has the capacity to instill insinuations in the hearts when they are dominated by remembrance of the world [and worldliness] and desires from the lower self (*Nafs*). If heart turns to the remembrance of God, then Satan is left with no other option but to move away [from this person in whom the Divine remembrance predominates] and does not have the capacity left to spread insinuations (*Waswaas*). At that time, an angel comes and commands one to good. Armies of angels and devils are in this way locked in an intense struggle. This state of combat continues until the heart becomes conquered and subservient to one of the two [armies]. In that case, heart becomes a resting abode and station of the victor [from among the angel and Satan]. If the [defeated] adversary passes by it, it does so as an attacker and not as its possessor and victor. It is [to be asserted] with sadness and again with great sadness that most of the hearts [of humanity] have been conquered by devils for their manipulations and conspiracies. These conquered, enslaved, and subjugated hearts [belonging to the vast majority of human beings] have become abodes of [vile and nefarious] satanic insinuations (*Waswaas*). They have given preference to the world (worldly life and ambitions) over the Hereafter. The reason for domination of satanic army [over hearts] is the following of lusts from the lower self. Their (i.e., hearts') return to God can only happen in the case when satanic grip and control is removed and heart is emptied out of desires from the lower self and is [instead] inhabited and filled with the remembrance of God. Angels descend in the valley of the heart through Divine remembrance and Satan has [no choice but] to flee from it with his army and associates.

Jabir ibn Zubaidatu al-Advi said, "I complained to Ala ibn Ziyad (May God have mercy upon him) (a great Gnostic) about the ill thoughts (Satanic insinuations) born in the heart". He said: "The similitude of that is like thieves breaking into the house. If something is in the home, thieves will take that with them and if nothing is there, they will have to return [empty-handed] in failure". Through this example, Ala ibn Ziyad informed that Satan does not enter into a heart devoid of desires from the lower self. Therefore, God Almighty has said:

إِنَّ عِبَادِى لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَٰنٌ

"[God told Satan] You will have no control over My special servants." (Qur'an, Chapter 17, Verse 65)

A person who is subservient to [the impulsions and command of] the desires of the lower self, is not a servant of God but instead, is a servant of desires [from the lower self]. God has said in another place [in Qur'an]:

أَفَرَءَيْتَ مَنِ ٱتَّخَذَ إِلَٰهَهُۥ هَوَىٰهُ

"Have you seen the state of a person who has made god out of one's desires of the lower self." (Qur'an, Chapter 45, Verse 23)

We have been informed with great clarity in this verse that those who are subservient to their desires from the lower self, have made god out of them (i.e., they worship their desires as if they were God).

The Way of Protection Against Satan: Amr bin al-'Aas (May God be pleased with him) said to Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him): "O Messenger of God! Satan comes in between myself and my prayers [to God] (in other words when I recite Qur'an in my prayers, Satan entangles my mind and heart into things other than God)." He replied:

ذالک شیطان یقال له خنزب، فاذا احسسته فتعوذ باللّٰه منه واتفل عن یسارک ثلاثا

"That's the Satan which is called 'Khinzab'. When you feel it, seek God's refuge from him and spit thrice on your left." (This narration is reported by *Hadith* collection *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of prophetic companion 'Amr ibn al-'Aas).

'Amr ibn al-'Aas (May God be pleased with him) said that when he followed this method, the complaint was addressed. It is learnt from these traditions that there is only one way of protecting oneself from Satan and that is the Divine remembrance (*Dhikr*). With this remembrance, Satan's soul is shaken to the core and he fails in all of his machinations. An intellectual reason that makes sense for the fleeing of Satan due to God's remembrance is that the heart will be devoid of Satanic insinuations only when something else enters into it. This is because when a thought comes into the heart, what was there from before does not stay. Hence, occupying the heart with something else will end Satanic insinuation, however, it is also possible that insinuation is born in the form of a new thought in the heart. Divine remembrance is the only thing in which Satan is not able to do anything in its presence. It is a rule that cure for every thing is done through its opposite. The opposite of Satanic insinuations is seeking refuge in God (*Isti'aadha*) and Divine remembrance through disowning the pretence of one's own power and might, as we say the following for protection against Satan:

أَعُوذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللّٰهِ الْعَلِيِّ الْعَظِيمِ

"I seek God's refuge from the accursed Satan. There is no power and might other than God, the Exalted, the Supreme."

Only those are capable of defending themselves from Satan who have pious awe, reverence, and fear of God and on whom the Divine remembrance predominates. Satan wants to overpower them with his machinations, but they defeat him with the power of God's remembrance. God says:

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ ٱتَّقَوْا۟ إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَٰٓئِفٌ مِّنَ ٱلشَّيْطَٰنِ تَذَكَّرُوا۟ فَإِذَا هُم مُّبْصِرُونَ

"Those who have pious awe, reverence and fear of God, when an insinuation comes to them from Satan, immediately engage in Divine remembrance and are startled and awakened [into action] by this evil occurrence." (Qur'an, Chapter 7, Verse 201)

In explanation of below verse:

مِن شَرِّ ٱلْوَسْوَاسِ ٱلْخَنَّاسِ

"[I seek refuge in God] from the evil of Satanic insinuations." (Qur'an, Chapter 114, Verse 4)

Mujahid (a great student of Prophetic companion Abdullah bin Abbas [May God be pleased with him] who specialized in Qur'anic exegesis) said that Satan casts his shadow on the heart; when a person of heart remembers the name of God ["*Allah*" which is the one and only personal Name of God while "God" is a language specific generic term to refer to Him and every human language has its own equivalent generic term for "God"] then he (Satan) retreats and sits up all shrunk, and when the human being is oblivious and heedless of Him then he (Satan) continues to spread on the heart. The contradiction between God's remembrance and Satanic insinuation is so great as it is between daylight and darkness or as it is between the day and the night such that when one comes, the other ceases to have its existence. Following sacred [Divine] verse refers to the same contradiction:

ٱسْتَحْوَذَ عَلَيْهِمُ ٱلشَّيْطَٰنُ فَأَنسَىٰهُمْ ذِكْرَ ٱللَّهِ ۚ

"Satan has completed its full control over them and has made them forget the remembrance of God." (Qur'an, Chapter 58, Verse 19)

Anas bin Malik (May God be pleased with him) narrates from Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) that he said:

ان الشیطان واضع خرطومه علی قلب ابن آدم فان هو ذکر الله تعالی قنس
وان نسی الله تعالی التقم قلبه

"Satan has placed his tail on the heart of the son of Adam (human being). When one remembers God, he (Satan) moves away and when one forgets God, he (Satan) swallows one's (human being's) heart." (This narration is reported by *Hadith* collections *Ibn Abi ad-Dunya, Abu Ya'la* and *Ibn 'Adi*).

Ibn Waddah (May God have mercy upon him) has stated that when a human being turns forty and does not repent from one's sins, Satan moves his hand over one's face and says: "How I adore this beautiful face who will not have salvation as one's destiny". Just like lusts and temptations are interspersed with [human] flesh and blood, likewise Satan is circulating with the blood in one's veins and has surrounded the heart from all sides. Hence Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

ان الشیطان یجری من بنی آدم مجری الدم فضیقوا مجاریه بالجوع

"Satan circulates with blood in human body; so narrow down his passages with hunger (i.e., through fasting and non-indulgence in lusts related to sumptuous and excessive food and drink)".

The advice to narrow down [Satan's] passages was given because hunger puts an end to lusts and Satan enters the bodies through lusts and starts circulating in the blood, especially around the heart from all four directions (all sides) because the center of lusts is only the heart. The proof of Satan attacking from all four directions is found in this verse in which God, the Exalted, has narrated through the tongue of Satan who said:

لَأَقْعُدَنَّ لَهُمْ صِرَٰطَكَ ٱلْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴿١٦﴾

ثُمَّ لَءَاتِيَنَّهُم مِّنۢ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ أَيْمَٰنِهِمْ وَعَن شَمَآئِلِهِمْ ۖ

"I swear by You (O God!) that I will sit on Your straight path (right guidance) for them (human beings) then I will attack them from their front and also from their back, from their right [side] and also from their left [side]." (Qur'an, Chapter 7, Verse 16-17)

According to the saying of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) that [Satanic] insinuations are apprehensions [related to various matters that confront human beings] that occur to the heart through his persuasions. No one is devoid of these apprehensions as it has been mentioned in a prophetic narration (*Hadith*) that for every human being, there is a devil; if there is a difference [between human beings in terms of how they deal with him], it is only to the extent that some people oppose Satan, [while] some are subservient to him.

What is Satan? Here some people can raise questions about the nature of Satan like "Does he have a subtle body or no body at all?", "If he is a body then how does he enter into the human body and circulates in the veins [through bloodstream]?" Satan's nature and reality is not related to the outer knowledge. The similitude of the person raising such questions is of the one in whose body a snake penetrates and instead of worrying about getting it out, one instead indulges in stories about its shape, color, length and breadth. This is pure ignorance. Satan is your enemy and his enmity is clear like an open book. You should be busy in waging a valiant struggle and fight against him. He has been hiding inside your bodies, hearts and veins. You should worry about getting him out. God, the Exalted, has mentioned his enmity [towards human beings] many times in His book (Qur'an). He said:

إِنَّ ٱلشَّيْطَٰنَ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ فَٱتَّخِذُوهُ عَدُوًّا ۚ إِنَّمَا يَدْعُوا۟ حِزْبَهُۥ لِيَكُونُوا۟ مِنْ أَصْحَٰبِ ٱلسَّعِيرِ

"Verily, Satan is your enemy, so take him as your enemy. He calls his group [of followers to evil and wrong] so people will become denizens of Hell [which is his sole mission to take maximum possible number of human beings to Hell with him]." (Qur'an, Chapter 35, Verse 6)

أَلَمْ أَعْهَدْ إِلَيْكُمْ يَٰبَنِىٓ ءَادَمَ أَن لَّا تَعْبُدُوا۟ ٱلشَّيْطَٰنَ ۖ إِنَّهُۥ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ

"O Children of Adam! (i.e., the entire humanity from the beginning till the end of time) Had I not admonished you to not worship Satan [by obeying his diktats, evil promptings and insinuations about everything vile, evil, negative and injurious to your individual and collective well being]? Verily, he is your open and avowed enemy." (Qur'an, Chapter 36, Verse 60)

Human being should protect oneself from this enemy and not ask where this enemy is from, what's his lineage and color? If one needs to ask then one should ask how this enemy attacks, what types of weapons does he have, and what strategies he acts upon to subjugate his enemy (all humanity)? This has been previously explained that enemy's (Satan's) weapons are base desires from the lower self and through the power infused in him through these very desires, he enters deep into the kingdom and governance of the body. Through the strategies of insinuations and evil promptings, he defeats the people of weak faith [and resolve]. Strategies for fending off Satan's attacks have also been explained and the weapon has been mentioned that frustrates Satan's spirits and ambitions and forces him to escape from the battlefield. Commonfolk are commonfolk, even scholars (scholastic theologians) will not be permitted to know more than that. Recognizing the reality of the being and qualities of Satan belongs to the Gnostics ("*'Aarifeen*" or saints and knowers of God). These people are absorbed in the esoteric knowledge ("*'Ilm al-Mukashafa"* or knowledge of spiritual unveilings).

Types of Passing Thoughts (*Khawatir*) Occurring in the Heart: They are of three types: Firstly those thoughts that are inviters and callers to what is good. Such thoughts can be referred to as *Ilham* or Divine inspiration without any hesitation. Secondly, those passing thoughts that invite towards evil [or negative, depressing and harmful things]. Such thoughts can be referred to as Satanic insinuations and persuations (*Waswasa*) without any doubt. Thirdly, those that are in between Divine inspiration and Satanic insinuation and it can not be said with certainty whether they are from angel or Satan because one form of Satan's deception is to present evil as good. It is very difficult to distinguish between the two. Most people fell prey to this deception and get destroyed by it. For example, Satan tells a scholar (scholastic theologian) in the way of advice, "Look at the people! Ignorance is pushing them to extinction and heedlessness is drawing them close to destruction. They have reached close to the edge of hell and Divine wrath is about to envelope them. Do you not have mercy on these servants of God so you would rescue them from destruction through your precious advice and scholarly discourses? God has endowed you with [great] qualities like clear insights, deep understandings and a heart that feels for the sufferings of others. Your speech is appealing, your style of delivery [of discourses] is popular, your words have the light of faith. Why are you being ungrateful for these [immense] blessings of God? May it not happen that you get punished [by God] for your ingratitude and you end up earning His displeasure and possibly your capabilities of dissemination of knowledge and inviting people to God are taken away from you as a punishment". Satan constantly admonishes this and other similar advice so many times that a scholar's heart is not left without getting influenced by them, and in the end one steps into the field of giving sermons and gets out of one's solitude into assembly of people. At this ponit, Satan deceives one [further] by telling one that nothing influences the hearts until the one giving advice and semonizing people is good looking, is well dressed and well spoken. One gets into this [Satanic] deception and is gradually brought into a station from whence ostentation, arrogance, self-righteousness, and desire for fame and power is born and everyone other than this person oneself seem lowly and inferior. Consider how Satan created so many sources of evil in guise of good and seemingly all these counsels were based on sincerity with the scholar while he was secretly dragging one into destruction. This poor [unususpecting] scholar or preacher is spreading pearls of wisdom in words and thinks that one's purpose is good, although the heart is busy in the struggle for fame and popularity [among masses]. One thinks that one's efforts will bear fruits and one will get some status in the Hereafter.

According to traditions, the accursed Satan came to Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) in the form of a man and asked him to say "*La ilaha ill Allah*" or "There is no god but God". Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) replied: "Even though this statement [of testimony about God] is truth, I will not say it [just] because you asked me to say it". The reason for Jesus's refusal is the same that Satan's persuasions to do even good things are not devoid of pitfalls and entrapments and Satan's entrapments through good are beyond estimation. Through them, all those scholars (scholastic theologians and preachers), worshippers, abstainers of worldliness,

spiritual travelers and generous get destroyed who do not like open evil under all circumstances and furthermore, they do not agree to commit sins. Some examples of Satan's deceptions will be presented in the third volume [of Ghazali's *magnum opus* "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God"] in the book about arrogance and self-conceitedness and if God gives me life, I plan to write a book on the same topic with [book] title "*Talbees Iblis*" (Persuasions and Entrapments of the Devil). In every place, country and nation, every person is a victim of persuasions and entrapments of the devil. In particular, he (Satan) has exceeded all bounds in entrapping people about [religious] beliefs and theological schools of thoughts (*Madhahib*). Now good and righteousness has become only a ritualistic matter. Human beings must pause at their every thought and intention and examine all good and bad aspects of them [before proceeding with acting upon them], and determine whether that thought and intention is a Satanic insinuation or Divine inspiration and pause as much as possible and use all of their capabilities of contemplation, and evaluation (mental and intellectual abilities) because this is not determined without breadth of knowledge, depth of insight and awe, reverence and fear of God (*Taqwa*) as God has said:

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ ٱتَّقَوْا۟ إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَٰٓئِفٌ مِّنَ ٱلشَّيْطَٰنِ تَذَكَّرُوا۟ فَإِذَا هُم مُّبْصِرُونَ

"Whenever a thought [or insinuation] occurs from Satan, [righteous servants of God] engage in Divine remembrance and are startled by it that in turn opens up their eyes [about what's actually happening to them]." (Qur'an, Chapter 7, Verse 201)

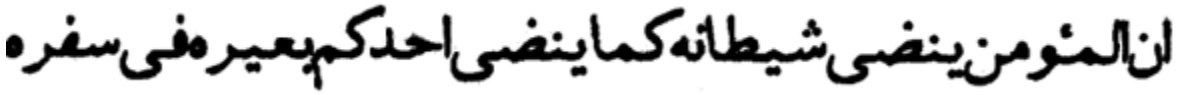
In other words, under these circumstances, they (the righteous people) search their hearts and their inner light takes them out of the darkness of ignorance. With "*Kashf*" (spiritual unveiling in the state of wakefulness) and insight (*Baseerah*), all complexities and secrets are untangled. A person devoid of pious awe, reverence and fear of God (*Taqwa*), pressurized by one's desires from the lower self, accepts the deception of Satan deeming it good (*Khair*) and unconsciously starts treading the path of destruction. Qur'an says the following about such people:

وَبَدَا لَهُم مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يَكُونُوا۟ يَحْتَسِبُونَ

"They will come across a matter from God that will be beyond their imagination." (Qur'an, Chapter 39, Verse 47)

Acquiring Knowledge of Satan's Deception is Personally Obligatory on Every Individual: In the knowledge of external matters (exoteric knowledge or "*Ilm Mu'amla*"), the important thing is to be aware and informed of the deception of the lower self (*Nafs*) and cunningness of Satan This is obligatory on every individual but people are heedless and negligent of fulfilling this obligation and are busy with acquiring such knowledge that will further incite the insinuations and promptings (*Waswaas* from Satan) that will provide Satan with an opportunity to maintain his stranglehold [on

people]. They forget about his enmity and ways of protecting themselves from him by getting involved in acquiring such knowledge. The only way of getting rid of plethora of insinuations and promptings is to shut the door of such thoughts. The doors of such thoughts or perceived dangers (or "*Khawatir*" that are referred to as such because they get imposed on heart when the human being has inner guard and defenses down and is negligent of them) are the five senses on the outward and lusts and worldly entanglements on the inward. Adopting solitude in a small home, shuts down the passageways of the five [external] senses. Keeping distance from relatives and wealth, reduces the love of lusts and worldliness. In this situation [when all inward and outward doors are closed], only the doors of thoughts remain open, but they can be guarded with the guard of God's remembrance. Sometimes these thoughts are able to successfully sneak past the guard into the heart. If that happens, an intense struggle is needed against this "thief". This [intense inner spiritual] struggle never ends but instead continues on till the last breath of one's life. This is because an alive person can never be immune from Satan who is always watching [intently] in a state of ambush and attacks as soon as an opportunity arises. It is imperative to be on guard at all times against this enemy (Satan). Sometimes, one is able to subjugate this enemy and inflicts a blow on him through spiritual struggle, but this defeat is not permanent but only temporary. As soon as Satan gets an opportunity, he attacks again. As long as blood is circulating in veins, continuing the struggle against Satan is essential. The doors of the "sanctuary city" of the heart always remain open for Satan throughout one's life and they never close. These are the doors of lusts, anger, jealousy, greed, and avarice that will be explained soon. When city entrances are open, and enemy is vigilant then city can only be defended through [spiritual] struggle and watchfulness. One person asked Hasan al-Basri (May God have mercy upon him): "O Abu Sa'eed! Does Satan sleep?" He replied: "If he were to sleep, would we not have a few moments of peace and comfort?" Although a believing servant cannot escape from Satan, one can defeat him and can defend oneself against him by weakening Satan's power. Prophet Muhammed (Peace and blessings of God be upon him said:



"A believing servant makes Satan emaciated and weak as you do so with your camels through your journeys". (This narration is reported by *Hadith* collection *Musnad Ahmad* on the authority of prophetic companion Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him]).

Abdullah bin Mas'ud (May God be pleased with him) said that the Satan of a believer [who shadows and accompanies one throughout one's life] is weak. Qais bin al-Hajjaj (a great Gnostic) said: "My Satan told me that when I entered into you, I was like [the size and strength of] a camel and now I am like a bird". I asked him for the reason of that. He replied: "You keep melting away my body by means of God's remembrance". Anyhow, for people of pious awe, reverence and fear of God (*Taqwa*), closing the doors of Satan, watching over them vigilantly, in other words, closing the external doors and mitigating the clear ways that invite one to sin and evil is not difficult. However, they too

get deceived by intricate methods of Satan and are not able to defend themselves against him, as it has been explained in the aforementioned about scholars (scholastic theologians) and preachers that Satan surreptitiously invites and leads them through the doors of good [deeds] towards evil.

The enormity of challenge is that there are many doors for Satan to enter into the heart while there is just one door for angel to enter from. This transcendent angelic door [of the heart] becomes dubious in the presence of innumerable doors of Satan. In relation to these doors (entrances into the heart), a human being is like a traveler who travels through a jungle in a dark black night, who stops at a certain location where innumerable difficult and arduous pathways emerge baffling one as to which way to choose that will help one advance and reach the destination. Choosing the right path from among innumerable and unclear paths can be done in two ways: first with intellect and insight; second with the sunlight. In this matter, a heart with pious awe, reverence and fear of God, intellect and insight, knowledge of the [Divine] book and the prophetic way (*Sunnah*) are equivalent to the sunlight. Just like the light of the sun facilitates the finding of the right path towards destination, likewise, the light of the knowledge of the [Divine] book and the prophetic way (*Sunnah*), guides one towards the destination, otherwise the pathways of Satan [leaving one towards vileness] are innumerable and it is very difficult to protect against them. Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (May God be pleased with him) narrates that once Prophet Muhammed (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) drew a line [in ground with a stick] and said: "This is the path of God". After that, he drew various lines towards the right and left of that [first] line and said: "These are also paths but in each one of these, a devil is present who invites people to tread that path". After that he recited the following verse:

وَأَنَّ هَٰذَا صِرَٰطِى مُسْتَقِيمًا فَٱتَّبِعُوهُ ۖ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا۟ ٱلسُّبُلَ

"And this is My path which is straight and firm [devoid of any imperfections as it leads one straight to God]. So, tread this path and do not tread other paths." (Qur'an, Chapter 6, Verse 153)

He (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) termed various lines as paths that were drawn around the straight path (*Sirat al-Mustaqeem*). One knows about the abundance of Satanic paths from this prophetic narration. From among these paths, there is a path towards which Satan invites scholars (scholastic theologians), pious, those who have controlled desires from the lower self, and those who refrain from a life of sins, by deceiving them through it. Now a path from among these paths [of deception] will be mentioned that human being starts to tread unknowingly and imperceptibly. This incident is mentioned in a prophetic narration (*Hadith*). Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) mentioned a monk (a person of Divine worship in a state of solitude while negating all worldly desires) from the Children of Israel in whose city, Satan strangled a girl and then put this thought in the heart of her family members that her cure is with that monk. They brought her to the monk who flatly refused [to deal

with that situation] but they persistently insisted until the monk was compelled to cure her. After that, Satan started to insinuate thoughts of fornication in monk's heart and incited him to indecencies until he fornicated, and she became pregnant. Satan then instilled the fear of disrepute and disgrace and insinuated her murder in the heart of the monk to conceal the secret [of his crime] and then he could somehow assure her family of her natural death. This is exactly what he did. Satan then continued his actions against the monk and instilled into the heart of girl's family that the monk killed her after getting her pregnant from fear of disgrace. They came to the monk and inquired him about her. Monk gave the same response that Satan instilled into his heart that the girl was ill, and she died due to her illness, but they did not believe him and wanted to get him arrested. Satan then told the monk everything that happened was due to his own devising as he was the one who strangled her, he was the one who persuaded her parents to send her to him (the monk), he was the one who incited him (the monk) to fornicate and kill her and now he is the one who can help him (the monk) get out of that situation by paying obeisance to him. Monk asked him as to how he can obey him (Satan). Satan told him that he can get out of the situation by prostrating before him twice. Monk then prostrated before Satan. Satan then walked away saying: "There is nothing I can do for you; what do I know about you?" God has said the following about such people:

كَمَثَلِ ٱلشَّيْطَٰنِ إِذْ قَالَ لِلْإِنسَٰنِ ٱكْفُرْ فَلَمَّا كَفَرَ قَالَ إِنِّى بَرِىٓءٌ مِّنكَ

"Similitude of Satan is that he first tells human being to disbelieve [in God]. Then when one becomes a disbeliever, Satan says, 'I have nothing to do with that person (human being)'". (Qur'an, Chapter 59, Verse 16)

Consider how Satan forced the monk with his deceptions, to commit enormous sins (*Kaba'ir*) by obeying his orders. If he had not acted on [Satan's] advice [and persuasion] to cure, he would not have fornicated and then committed murder. Ostensibly, the advice to cure was good and no one could have imagined that there would be evil embedded within it. Nevertheless, Satan's strategy is to find evil through the path of good and noble endeavors and once he puts one on the path of evil, he pulls one from one evil to another until all paths of salvation are closed, and human being is forced to keep treading the path of evil without even desiring to do so. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) means the same thing in his following saying:

من حام حول الحمى يوشك ان يقع فيه

"One who goes around the grazing (pasture) land is in danger of [inadvertently] getting into it [hence, it is necessary to avoid going near evil to avoid the possibility of falling into it]." (This narration is reported by *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of prophetic companion Naumaan bin Bashir [May God be pleased with him]).

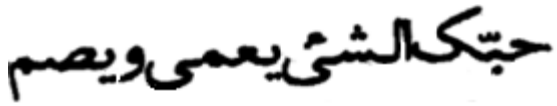
Satan's Entrances into the Hearts

Heart is like a fortress and Satan is like an enemy who wants to enter into it to occupy it and make it its possession. There is only one way of protecting the fortress from the enemy which is to safeguard the entrances and pathways that make the entry into the fortress possible. One who is not even aware of these entrances, how can such a one guard them and prevent the enemy from entering through them? Hence it is learnt from this that it is mandatory to protect the heart from Satan, rather it is personally obligatory (*Fard 'Ayn*) on every sane and adult person, and everything that is a means of getting to the personally obligatory is also mandatory. This is so because Satan cannot be prevented from entering [into the heart] without knowing his paths of entrance. That's why, knowing these paths is also necessary. These entrances and pathways are not perceivable through external senses but rather they are inner character traits or qualities of individuals. Satan uses these very traits as his means for entry [into the hearts]. These traits are large in numbers and hence only some entrances will be mentioned as follows where there are large assemblies of Satan's troops:

Anger and Lust: Intellect dissipates through two big entrances of the heart namely anger and lust. Army of Satan attacks [the heart] when the army of intellect weakens. When human being fells prey to anger, Satan plays with one as a child plays with a ball. According to a tradition, Satan met with Prophet Moses (also known as Musa [Peace and blessings of God be upon him]) and said: "O Moses! God has appointed you to the position of prophethood and granted you the honor to talk to Him. I am also a creation of God. I have committed a sin [of disobeying God when He commanded Satan to prostrate before Adam (Peace be upon him)] and want to repent. Please intercede to God on my behalf to accept my repentance". Moses (Peace be upon him) promised to intercede for him (Satan). Moses then went to Mount Sinai and spoke to God. After that when he was descending [from the mountain], God told him: "O Moses! Return the trust!" Moses (Peace be upon him) said: "O God! Your servant Iblis (Satan) is regretting the sin he committed and is repenting. Please accept his repentance". A Divine revelation came to Moses (Peace of God be upon him): "O Moses! Your plea has been accepted! Tell Iblis (Satan) to prostrate before the grave of Adam (Peace be upon him) to express his regret [for the sin he committed as a mark of truthfulness of his repentance]". Moses (Peace of God be upon him) conveyed this Divine commandment to Satan. Satan got lit up with anger [upon hearing that] and said with sheer arrogance: "I did not prostrate before Adam when he was alive, would I now prostrate before him when he is dead? However, I thank you for interceding to God on my behalf and because of that [favor], you now have a right over me. In order to fulfil that right, I tell you that if you remember me on three occasions, I will not be able to harm you: Firstly, at the time of anger because my soul is in your soul and my eye is within your eye. I circulate in every vein of the body like blood, therefore, be sure to pay attention to me at the time of anger. When human being has anger, I blow into one's nose then one loses

awareness of what one is doing. Secondly, at the time of war because when human being wants to fight against an enemy in a war front, I remind one of one's home, wife and children in order to make one forsake the thought of fighting in the war and to make one run away from it. Thirdly, never sit alone with a non-*Mahrem* woman (one who is potentially marriageable to him as she is not from among his prohibited relations of mother, mother-in-law, grandmother, daughter, granddaughter, sister, niece, or aunt). I become a messenger in between the hearts of man and woman and insinuate in each one's heart about the other. I continue doing that until they both get involved in a tribulation of sin (*Fitnah*)".

Greed and Jealousy: Satan pointed to three inner qualities through three occasions namely anger, lust, and greed. This is so because escape from the war is due to the greed of worldly possessions and wealth, not prostrating to the deceased Adam (Peace of God be upon him) is due to jealousy which is also a big entrance [into the heart] for Satan. One saint (Gnostic) asked Satan to show him his domination over human beings. He said: "I entrap human beings in the state of anger and lust and get full control over them". Satan appeared before a monk who asked him: "Which qualities of children of Adam (human beings) are more helpful to you?" He replied: "The intensity of anger. Hence, when human being roils up due to intensity of anger, I turn and kick one around like a child kicks a ball with one's foot." This is also a saying of Satan: "How can children of Adam (human beings) get control over me as when one is happy, I remain in one's heart and when one is angry, I fly into one's head". Greed or avarice is also a big entrance of Satan as it makes one blind and deaf. After that, one cannot listen to any good advice nor is able to see the path of goodness. A prophetic narration says:



"Your love with a thing makes you blind and deaf." (This narration is reported by *Hadith* collection *Abu Dawud* on the authority of prophetic companion Abu al-Darda [May God be pleased with him]).

Only through the light of insight, human being can be aware of Satan's entrances. When the darkness of greed and avarice subjugates the light of insight, Satan takes full advantage of that opportunity and puts the desire and greed for everything in one's heart that is detrimental and fatal for one. According to a tradition, when the massive flood came, Prophet Noah (also known as Nuh [Peace of God be upon him]) boarded his ship with all the people of faith from his nation and every pair of animals. He saw an old man sitting in the ship who was a stranger. He asked him who he was. He said: "I came to take the hearts away of your companions. Their bodies will be with you, but their hearts will be with me". Prophet Noah (Peace of God be upon him) said: "O enemy of God! Get out of here! There is no place for you here". He replied: "There are five things through which I destroy people. I will tell you three but will not tell you two". A Divine revelation came [to Prophet Noah (Peace of God be upon him)]: "O Noah! You are in no need of the three things that he wants to tell you. Find out from him what he is

hiding from you". Prophet Noah (Peace of God be upon him) asked him about the two things. He replied: "Greed and jealousy. These two things will never deceive me and will never fail to destroy people. It is the jealousy due to which I have been accursed [being removed from Divine Mercy] and given the title of 'Satan, the accursed' and it is the greed, for Adam everything in Paradise was made permissible for him except for one tree and I put its desire in his heart, that got him out of there".

Satiety: Eating to one's fill, even if it's permissible (*Halal*) and pure, is a big entrance for Satan [into the heart] due to its energizing and rejuvenating effects on lusts and lusts are the weapons of Satan. According to a tradition, Satan appeared before Prophet John, son of Prophet Zachariah (also known as Yahya son of Zakariyya [Peace and blessings of God be upon them both]) and he had entrapments [made out of ropes]. Prophet John (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) asked him: "What are these entrapments for?" He replied: "These are the entrapments of lusts and licentiousness. I capture children of Adam (human beings) with these". He asked: "Is there some entrapment for me as well?" He replied: "Yes. When you eat to your fill, I make prayers [to God] difficult on you". He asked: "Is there anything else for me?" He replied: "Nothing else besides that". He said: "I swear by God, I will not eat to my fill after today". Satan responded: "I also swear that I will not ever tell any beneficial thing to a *Muslim* [like you] (i.e., one who believes in and serves God in a state of total submission and surrender to the Will of God)". It is said that there are six harms of eating to one's fill: First, fear of God does not remain in the heart; second, one does not feel compassion on fellow humans and creations of God because one thinks of others as oneself (satiated like one) and does not feel the pangs of hunger; third, one feels that worship is burdensome; fourth, when one hears any words of wisdom, one's heart does not melt in humility and does not become capable of listening and accepting; fifth, when one says things of wisdom and advice, it has no effect on others; sixth, various [bodily and spiritual] diseases are born out of it.

Pomp and Glitter: Finding pomp, glitter, conspicuous consumption and displaying wealth, attractive is also an entrance for Satan. This display, pomp and glitter happens in dressing, material possessions and residence. When Satan sees the desire of displaying pomp and glitter in the heart of a human being, he inflames it further and shows one the dream of big buildings and convinces one that the walls around one's house should be high, home should be dazzling and well decorated, clothes should be beautiful and ride or conveyance should be expensive and decked. When such desires are fully entrenched in the heart, Satan knows that these desires will never separate from the heart and one desire will spawn another and acquiring one thing will lead to the worry of acquiring another into a never-ending chain [of desire for acquiring one thing after another] until death comes and one has to leave everything behind to leave the world. Satan's way of desires from the lower self is also dangerous for one's faith. Sometimes, the flame of desires forces its worshipper to tread the path of disbelief ("*Kufr"* or rejection of God). May God protect us from the desires of the lower self!

Covet and Expectations from People: Covet and expectations from others is also an important entrance for Satan [into the heart]. When greed [and expectations from others] dominates the heart, Satan continuously persuades one to have artificiality, ostentation and show off in front of those, one has expectations and greed from. It goes to such an extent that one with whom one has expectations from, becomes one's god and one harboring expectations, is always striving to make a place in the heart of one he or she is desiring from, even if it's through the means of lies, deception, show off and persuasions. Lowest level of this is that one exaggerates in praising the one he or she is expecting from and is reluctant to do the work of exhorting one to good and stopping one from evil for the reason of not offending one. Once Satan appeared before Abdullah ibn Hanzala (May God be pleased with him) and said: "O son of Hanzala! I am going to advise you so remember it". Abdullah ibn Hanzala said: "I am in no need of advice from you". Satan said: "Listen to it first, if it's good accept it, if it's bad reject it. O son of Hanzala! Other than God, never ask anyone a question that has greed and covet embedded in it. Also, control yourself in anger because when a servant loses control over oneself, I [am able to] take control of one".

Hastiness and Lack of Perseverance: These two qualities or character traits are also entry points for Satan. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessing of God be upon him) said:

العجلة من الشيطان والاناة من الله

"Hastiness (or hurrying to do something without careful deliberations) is from Satan and pausing to deliberate is from God". (This narration is reported by *Hadith* collection *Tirmidhi* on the authority of prophetic companion Sahl bin Sa'ad [May God be pleased with him]).

God says:

خُلِقَ ٱلْإِنسَٰنُ مِنْ عَجَلٍ

"Human being has been created with [a propensity to] haste." (Qur'an, Chapter 21, Verse 37)

وَكَانَ ٱلْإِنسَٰنُ عَجُولًا

"Human being has the propensity to haste." (Qur'an, Chapter 17, Verse 11)

God commanded Prophet Muhammed (Peace and blessing of God be upon him):

وَلَا تَعْجَلْ بِٱلْقُرْءَانِ مِن قَبْلِ أَن يُقْضَىٰٓ إِلَيْكَ وَحْيُهُۥ ۖ

"Don't haste in [reciting] Qur'an before the Divine revelation coming to you has been completed." (Qur'an, Chapter 20, Verse 114)

The reason for Divine prohibition from haste is that everything should be done with knowledge, research, and investigation, and for investigation, pause and deliberation is needed, while haste does not allow pause and investigation. At the time of haste, Satan imposes its evil on human beings in such a way that they don't even perceive it. According to a tradition, when Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) was born, all devils (*Shayateen*) went to their leader Iblis and told him: "Today all idols on the face of the earth were seen as fallen down". Iblis said: "Something new has happened for sure. I am going to the earth to see". Iblis roamed around the earth but did not see anything. In one place he saw some angels surrounding a newborn baby. Iblis went to his nation [of devils] and told them: "Tonight a prophet was born. All pregnancies that have happened in the world until today, I have been aware of them and the births have happened in my presence. But strangely, I did not know about this woman's pregnancy nor was I aware of the birth. Now be despair of idol worshipping. However, insinuate the servants of God (human beings) in their moments of haste [and you will have your way over them]".

Wealth and Material Possessions: *Dirhams* and *Dinars* (gold and silver currencies), material possessions, properties and pieces of land owned are all big entrances for Satan [into the human heart]. Heart of the person owning more than needed material possessions, is an abode of Satan and possessor of only the needed material has a free heart. If a person gets hundred *Dinars*, various desires are born into the heart. The biggest of these is to get hundred more and it's a never-ending cycle. When one had nothing, there was no desire, no greed, and no need. When one got hundred *Dinars*, one started to think of oneself as being rich even though one became needy of nine hundred more. Getting hundred *Dinars* gave one the thought that if one had nine hundred more, one would have bought a house. After house, the need to get household goods surfaces followed by issues of dressing and comfort living and this chain of needs is ever expanding. For things that are present, things that are not present become essential. Even before one's worry ends, another one starts and this chain of needs ends in hell. Thabit al-Banani (May God have mercy upon him - a famous Gnostic and saint) said: "When Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) was given prophethood [at his age of forty years], Iblis (the leader of devils) told his group: 'Today a new event has taken place. Go and see what happened'. All devils spread around the earth but could not find anything and returned unsuccessful. Iblis told them: 'Stay here! I will go and look'. He came back and told his disciples: 'God has granted prophethood to Muhammad. Now go after his friends and companions [to dissuade them from Divine guidance]'. Devils turned towards the earth and returned unsuccessful and said: 'We have never seen a people like these until

today. When we cause them to do a mistake, they rise up for prayers and that brings about [Divine] forgiveness for their mistakes'. Iblis said: 'Wait and be patient. Soon they will dominate the world then we will be surely successful in our devising'".

There is a tradition that once Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) was lying [on ground] with his head on a rock [using it as a pillow showing his state of poverty and humility]. Satan passed by and quipped: "O Jesus! Are you too inclined towards the world?" Jesus picked up the rock from underneath his head and threw it at Satan and said: "This stone and everything else from this world are for you alone". The conclusion drawn from this is that even a stone is a material possession from the world and Satan can still do his work [of misguiding humanity to the wrong paths] with a stone. For example, a person rises up in the early hours of morning for *Tahajjud* prayers (pre-dawn prayers that are extremely meritorious and helpful for spiritual advancement and are performed in the third part of the night when night time between sunset and dawn is divided up into three parts) and finds a stone near the place of prostration in prayers. In this situation, Satan will surely put the thought in one's heart to lie down for a little bit resting one's head on the stone. This lying down will be a harbinger of sleep that in turn will prevent one from praying the *Tahajjud* prayers. If the stone had not been there, one would not have thought of having a pillow, there would not have been a need to lie down leading one to sleep and being deprived of the *Tahajjud* prayers. [As seen in the aforementioned,] There had been so much damage done by even this one stone then cast a glance at the condition of people, with a view of deriving lesson for yourself, who have comfortable beds and pillows made out of silk and have all goods of comfort-seeking in their homes. Can such a person even enjoy the taste of Divine worship? There will always be a desire for comfort present in one's heart.

Fear of Poverty and Miserliness: These two vile and negative qualities are also two big entrances for Satan [into the human heart]. Miserliness and fear of poverty are two such negative destructive [inner] traits that prevent one from spending in the path of God [in charitable deeds] and persuade one to hoard and hold on to one's possessions. Qur'an foretells such folks of painful consequences:

وَٱلَّذِينَ يَكْنِزُونَ ٱلذَّهَبَ وَٱلْفِضَّةَ وَلَا يُنفِقُونَهَا فِى سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ فَبَشِّرْهُم بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ

"Those who hoard gold and silver and do not spend them in the path of God (on charitable causes and beneficial endeavors for humanity promoting economic wellbeing of human societies), give them the tidings of a painful chastisement." (Qur'an, Chapter 9, Verse 34)

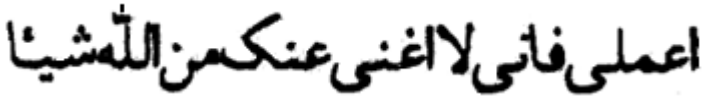
Khaithama bin Abdur Rahman (May God be pleased with him - a great prophetic companion) said that Satan claims: "No matter how much domination human being gets over me, there are three things that are such that one can never get domination over me on those matters. Firstly, taking someone's property unjustifiably; secondly, spending without appropriate opportunity and need; thirdly, not spending on where there is a need to spend". Sufyan al-Thawri (May God have mercy on him - a great saint and

Gnostic) said: “Satan does not have more effective tactic than the fear of poverty. When a person starts fearing poverty, inclination towards falsehood and wrong is born in one. One desists from truth, prefers desires from the lower self and is guilty of having low opinion of one’s Lord. Miserliness breeds greed and greed becomes a chain in the feet of human being that does not let one move out from marketplaces and places of earning goods. These marketplaces are Satan’s nest and resting places [because one has the tendency to become materialistic and oblivious to any spiritual considerations and of noble and selfless undertakings therein]”. Abu Umama (May God be pleased with him - a prophetic companion) said: “When Iblis (the leader of devils) came to the world, he entreated to God: ‘O God! You have casted me away from your Mercy and thrown me to this earth. Please make a home for me here’. God said: ‘Bathroom is your home’. He asked: ‘Appoint for me a place to have company’. God said: ‘Marketplaces and streets are your places of company’. He asked: ‘Appoint for me food and sustenance’. God replied: ‘That food is your sustenance on which My Name has not been taken [by people eating it]’. He said: ‘Food has been appointed; may I also have water?’ God replied: ‘Intoxicants and drugs are your drinks’. He asked: ‘Please grant me an inviter’. God commanded: ‘Fulfill this objective [of yours] from musical instruments’. He asked: ‘What is your command about reading and writing’. God replied: ‘Read poetry [that does not invite to good] and tattoo the bodies’. He asked: ‘Grant me a narrative’. God replied: ‘Lie is your narrative’. He asked: ‘Grant me nets (entrapments) for hunting’. God replied: ‘Lusting after the opposite gender is you net [i.e., if pursued in immoral and unethical ways]’”.

Religious Bigotry: What’s being referred to here as religious bigotry is the arrogance and prejudice of people of different schools of thoughts [and religions] against each other. The basis of this is not truth but desires from the lower self. People hate their opponents [in matters of religious and ideological differences] and look down upon them. This is such an evil that it destroys every worshipper (or religious person) and sinner alike. To criticize people and finding faults with them belongs to an animal quality from among a host of animalistic qualities. When Satan presents this condemnable trait as something good, human temperaments that are already close to it, adopt it and one becomes fully engaged in it and feels happy with the thought that one is involved in a religious struggle [and hence thinks of it as a Godly thing] even though one is obeying Satan. The state of religious and sectarian differences is such that [for example] a person has adopted bigotry in one’s love for Abu Bakr (May God be pleased with him - a great prophetic companion) but this love is not pure, instead it is adulterated and admixed with *Haram* (things that are prohibited), lies, enmity and acrimonious discord [that leads to turmoil]. If Abu Bakr (May God be pleased with him) sees such a person [today], he would declare one as his enemy instead of his friend. This is because, his (Abu Bakr's) friend is the one who follows his way and adopts his noble qualities and character and stops one’s tongue from useless talk [as he used to do]. The way of Abu Bakr was such that he used to put pebbles in his mouth to prevent himself from saying useless things. This person who says useless and unnecessary things [who claims to love Abu Bakr], what right does one have to claim one’s love and

friendship for Abu Bakr (May God be pleased with him)? [Conflicts, fights, and hatred on the basis of people's religions can be construed as such]

A second person has crossed all limits of exaggeration in one's love for Ali (May God be pleased with him - a great prophetic companion) even though one is not even slightly close to his (Ali's) actions and noble character. Ali (May God be pleased with him) wore a dress for less than one *Dirham* during his reign of governance (*Khilafah*) while the false claimant of his love is going around dressed in silk clothes (that are forbidden for men according to religious code) that are in turn made with forbidden (Haram) money. On the day of judgment, Ali (May God be pleased with him) will consider such a one not his friend but an enemy. Can a person be declared truthful in one's friendship who takes the beloved child of one's friend to one's home and beat him up, pull his hair and injure his body but even with that, keeps claiming that one is a sincere friend to the child's parent and greatly loves one. Such is the state of the people who claim to love the four rightly guided caliphs (Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali [May God be pleased with them all]) and the noble prophetic companions (May God be pleased with them all) and are involved in destroying the religion even though the religion was the most beloved thing to them (caliphs and other noble prophetic companions) and they gave it preference over their own lives, possessions, family and relatives. These people are guilty in the Divine law who cut it into pieces with the scissors of lusts, never cease to claim their love for prophetic companions but in reality, obey the joint enemy of God and His friends - Satan, the accursed. This reality will be [crystal] clear on the Day of Judgment when they will be punished in front of their "friends". Forget about the Day of Judgment, if they come to know of prophetic companions' view of them and of the type of people they like in this very world, then they will be put to great shame by looking at their own condition and will not dare to bring the names of these great pious people on their filthy tongues. Satan also convinces these followers [of various prophetic companions] that if someone dies in one's love for Abu Bakr and Umar (May God be pleased with them both), the fire [of hell] will not even come close to him. Satan assures others that if they sacrifice their lives in their love for Uthman and Ali (May God be pleased with them both) then they will go to heaven without any accountability [to God for their worldly actions] while in reality no one's love and closeness will be of any benefit on that day, only one's own [good and righteous] deeds [in this worldly life] will be of benefit. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) told his beloved daughter Fatima (May God be pleased with her):



"Perform actions (good noble righteous deeds) because I cannot protect you from anything from God." (This narration is reported by *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of prophetic companion Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him]).

This is an example of following desires from the lower self that have been mentioned here. The same applies to people who hold prejudice for the traditional schools of thoughts (widely accepted for over a thousand years by the general consensus of the community as part of the traditional Islamic methodology designed to prevent excesses,

deviant ideologies and ensuring moderation through compliance to traditional understanding) of Imams Shafa'i, Abu Hanifa, Malik and Ahmed (May God have mercy upon them all) and proceed to such an extent in their prejudice that looking down at other schools of thoughts becomes certain. Everyone is claimant of the veracity of their own *Imam* but does not follow their noble character. On the Day of Judgment, these great *Imams* will ask their followers: "Our schools of thought were [made up of] actions and not sayings and sayings too were for actions then what's the reason for you giving importance to sayings while avoiding actions thus opposing our methodology and character making false claims to be followers of our schools of thought?" This is a big entrance for Satan and a big path for his arrival [into the heart]. Many scholars (scholastic theologians) reached destruction through the hands of Satan of this way. These are the people who did not have fear of God, who harbor greed and inclination for the world, their insight into religion is weak, and in their following [of religious teachings] the driving force behind it is not sincerity [and devotion to God] but instead is the desire to gain devotion and respect from people. That's why, they have been involved in religious bigotry and think of this bigotry as good. They do not know that this bigotry is a Satanic deed but alas these people are not aware of Satan's deceptions and machinations and instead are involved in practically implementing his devising. Ordinary people have started to criticize scholars (scholastic theologians), principles of religion have been forgotten, and differences of opinions in intricacies of the religious law (*Fiqh*) have been given importance. These scholastic theologians have gotten themselves destroyed along with others. May God accept ours and their repentance. Hasan al-Basri (May God have mercy upon him - a great Gnostic and saint) mentioned this quote from Satan: "I presented sins in embellished and decorated way to the nation and followers (*Ummah*) of Muhammad but they broke my back through repentance. After that, I embellished such sins before them from which they do not repent. These sins are desires from the lower self (*Nafs*)". Satan has spoken the truth [in this matter]. People do not even know that in these matters they are going towards sins, so how would they even repent? A big deception of Satan is that one forgets about one's obligations and instead gets involved in differences [of opinions] that are present in issues related to scholastic theology and [intricacies of] beliefs. Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (May God be pleased with him - a prophetic companion) said that once some people were busy with God's remembrance (*Dhikr*) then Satan came. He intended that they leave their gathering [of Divine remembrance] and stop them but could not succeed in his ambitions, and those remembering God frustrated every one of his strategies. He was then forced to instigate some people sitting nearby who were engaged in worldly conversations to cause trouble. They started to fight among themselves during the course of their conversations to such an extent that they started to beat and injure each other. From the gathering of Divine remembrance, some people rose up to stop the other group of people and asked them not to fight. Here the purpose of Satan was not to cause a fight, but he wanted to stop God's remembrance and cause the people doing it to leave.

Common Folk and Philosophical Debates: One of Satan's methods is that he instigates common folks to get involved in knowledges that they are weak in and invites them to deliberate on matters that they cannot afford [to delve in]. For example, the

knowledge of God's Being and His Divine qualities, and likewise other similar matters that their weak intellects are unable to perceive. In this situation, they do not see their own weak and limited intellects nor do they see their lack of knowledge, instead they start to doubt the religion and such ideas about God get born in their minds that exclude them from the sphere of religion and instead, put them in the circle of disbelief and innovation in religion (*Bid'a*) or embracing novelty and alien ideas in religion. They don't even know that they have lost the priceless commodity of faith, and instead they are happy with it and think that whatever has occurred into their heart is real understanding and insight, and that has been achieved through their own intelligence and excessive intellect. These poor folks don't even know that most mindless person is the one who trusts one's intellect much and the most intelligent is the one who thinks of one's intellect as deficient and keeps asking the scholars [and the learned]. Aisha (May God be pleased with her - the wife of the Prophet and a leading scholar and teacher) quotes this from Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him):

ان الشيطان ياتى احدكم فيقول: من خلقك؟ فيقول الله تبارك وتعالى
فيقول فمن خلق الله؟ فاذا وجد احدكم ذالك فليقل آمنت بالله ورسوله فان
ذالك يذهب عنه

"Satan comes to one of you and asks: 'Who created you?' One replies: 'God'. He then asks: 'Who created God?' If anyone of you encounters this situation, one should say: 'I believe in God and His Prophet'. By saying it like this, the [Satanic] insinuation will end." (This narration is reported by *Hadith* collections *Ahmed*, *Bazzar*, *Abu Ya'li*, *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*)

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) did not allow intellectual debates on curing insinuations because insinuations occur to the common folks and not to scholars. Oridinary people should renew their faith and engage themselves in worship and economic activities and leave the knowledge for the scholars. An ordinary person can reach disbelief by saying baseless things about God and His Path. Saying something without obtaining depth in true knowledge is like presenting oneself to waves without knowing swimming. It is obvious that its consequences would be none other than one's own destruction. The deceptions of Satan about beliefs and religions are so many that they can not even be estimated. What has been mentioned about them is a sample of these deceptions.

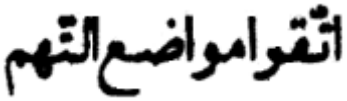
Harboring Negative and Bad Opinions: One of the doors of Satan's deceptions is to have bad opinion about [fellows] Muslims [and everyone else]. God says:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ ٱجْتَنِبُواْ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ ٱلظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ ٱلظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ

"O you who believe! Shun much of the bad opinions because some of the bad opinions are sins." (Qur'an, Chapter 49, Verse 12)

One who harbors bad opinion of one's brother (or sister) will surely be a victim of Satan's deception. Satan will inflame the bad opinion one harbors and will persuade one to backbite against him or her or to not fulfill one's responsibilities towards him or

her or show laziness in one's respect towards him or her or look down upon him or her and think of oneself as better than him or her. All these conditions are of one's own destruction. That's the reason why Divine law has commanded [people] to avoid the places of blame. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:



"Avoid the places of blame [to avoid getting perceived in a wrong way because perceptions also need to be managed to avoid misunderstandings and conflicts to retain the state of inner and outer peace]".

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) himself used to avoid blame and suspicion. That's why Ali bin Hussain narrates this from Safiyya bint Hai bin Akhtab (May God be pleased with her - a wife of the Prophet who was a daughter of a local Jewish tribal chief) said: "Prophet was in *I'tikaf* (seclusion for the sake of Divine worship) in the mosque. I came to visit him. I [coincidently] became menstruating. When it was evening, I started to go back [to my home]. Prophet (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) also started to walk with me. Along the way, there came across two men from among the *Ansars* (people of the city of Medina). They greeted the prophet with salutations of peace (*Salam*) and went about their way. The prophet called them and said: 'This is Safiyya bint Hai'. They responded: 'O Prophet of God! We have a good opinion of you (i.e., we cannot even think of anything bad about you so you did not even have to explain it to us that you were with your wife)'. The prophet said: '[You are telling the truth but] Satan circulates in the veins of human being [in the bloodstream and prompts one to blame and suspect others to sow discord and conflict among them]. I had this thought that he may dissuade you [or insinuate something bad along the lines of suspicion and blame] in your hearts [about the woman I was with and hence, I felt it necessary to explain]". (This narration is reported by *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*)

Consider how much Prophet (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) cared about protecting their religion and the betterment of their Hereafter [by preventing the rise of wrong suspicions and blame in their hearts]. Also, how much he showed kindness to his followers by teaching them the way to avoid places that can invite suspicions and blame and taught that even a learned person should not show laziness about one's state. One who is known for one's pious awe, reverance and fear of God (*Taqwa*) and for following the Divine law, should not think that the people would not have a bad or negative opinion about one and will necessarily have a good opinion about one. No matter how much one excels in knowledge and God-fearingness, people do not view one just one way. Some people think of one as good and some as bad. Rather, number of people who think bad of one exceed those who think good of one. It is imperative to protect oneself from bad opinions of others and blame of the evil people. Bad opinion is expected from them. When you see someone busy in having bad opinions of others and finding faults with them then know that one is involved in the evil [and the negativity] of the inner self. Bad opinions of others is a reflection of one's inner evil [and negativity] and wants to see everyone in the image of one's own [evil and negative] being. A believer finds excuses for one's brother's (or sister's) actions. A

hypocrite does not have the ability to do anything other than backbiting. A believer's heart is clean and clear towards every person [and meets and thinks of them with an open heart].

This was a short discussion on entrances of Satan [into the human heart]. These entrances are so numerous that they cannot be estimated. In my opinion, whatever has been written and whatever entrances have been mentioned here, all other entrances [of Satan into the heart of human being] can be deduced from them. However, many negative inner traits that one has, everyone of these traits is a weapon of Satan and a door from among the doors of Satan [into the human heart].

The Way of Protection from Satan: This question can be asked here: "What is the cure for [protecting oneself from the machinations of] Satan? Would the remembrance of God and saying '*La Hawla wa la quwwata illa billah*' or 'There is no power and might other than God' a protection against him?" It should be known that curing the heart is only possible when all the entrances are shutdown through which Satan enters into the hearts and pollutes them. In other words, heart should be purified of all negative and vile inner destructive qualities. Purification of heart from inner destructives is an extensive topic. The sole purpose of the third volume or quarter of the [present] book "*Ihya Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God" is to lay down the cure for the inner destructive qualities [in the human heart]. Since every such inner destructive trait is in need of its own chapter [for a thorough treatment] as you will see in subsequent pages, it is enough to mention here that if the heart is cleansed and purified of these inner destructive negative evil qualities then Satan does not get an opportunity to firm up his feet in the heart. Most he can do is to come and pass by. The remembrance of God becomes an impediment in his way. Remembrance of God has its effect on the heart when it is enlightened with the light of pious awe, reverence and fear of God (*Taqwa*) and is purified of the pollution of negative condemnable inner traits. If that's not the case then God's remembrance will only be deemed as a mere thought or a momentary state in the heart and it will not have a governance and dominion over it. It easily solidifies its control over the chessboard of the heart. God says:

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ ٱتَّقَوْا۟ إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَٰٓئِفٌ مِّنَ ٱلشَّيْطَٰنِ تَذَكَّرُوا۟ فَإِذَا هُم مُّبْصِرُونَ

"Those who have pious awe, reverence and fear of God (*Taqwa*), when a danger (a negative evil thought) comes into their heart from Satan, they immediately enage in God's remembrance and their eyes open up immediately [as they are startled by the throught and know that the negativity they are finding in their hearts is from Satan and they need to get rid of it immediately]." (Qur'an, Chapter 7, Verse 121)

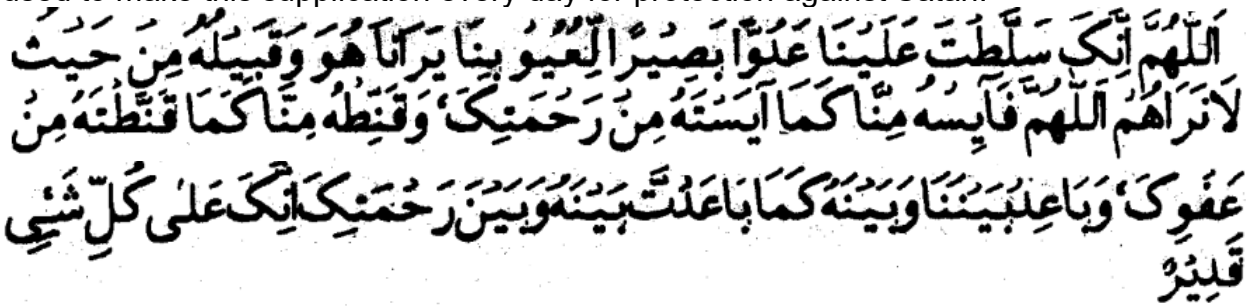
In this verse, a special distinction has been made for the person having fear of God. The example of Satan is like that of a hungry dog. If you do not have any bread or meat for it then you can push it away from you but if you have meat in your hand and dog is hungry too then it will not go away by pushing it away but instead will jump on the meat. Satan runs away by hearing one scolding from the heart where there is no food for him. However, the hearts where his food is present, he surely attacks them and just scolding it with tongue is not sufficient for it. A heart dominated by lusts, does not allow the

reality of God's remembrance come into it and that heart becomes a resting place for Satan. He does not knock at the doors of the God-fearing that are devoid of desires from the lower self and from inner destructive qualities due to them having lusts, but he knocks at them when he sees them heedless and negligent of Divine remembrance. However, he runs away from such hearts when they return to God's remembrance. The proof of his escape through Divine remembrance are those Qur'anic verses and *Hadiths* (prophetic traditions) that enjoin seeking God's refuge at the time of Satanic insinuations. For example, there is a verse:

فَٱسْتَعِذْ بِٱللَّهِ مِنَ ٱلشَّيْطَٰنِ ٱلرَّجِيمِ

"Seek God's refuge from Satan, the accursed." (Qur'an, Chapter 16, Verse 98)

Abu Hurairah (May God be pleased with him - a prophetic companion) said: "Once the devils (followers of Satan) that are with a believer and an unbeliever met. Both inquired about each other's wellbeing. The Satan of the unbeliever was overweight and there was excessive fat on his body, but the Satan of the believer was frail, weak, worrisome, and homeless. The Satan of unbeliever asked him: 'Why have you made such condition of yourself? Why are you so weak and skinny?' He replied: 'I am with a person who begins with the name of God when one eats. I remain hungry [as a result of that]. When one drinks water, one begins with the name of God and I have trepidation with thirst. When one wears clothes, one takes the name of God, that's why my body remains exposed. When one puts [hair] oil in one's hair [to strengthen the roots of hair as it is customary in many cultures] one takes the name of God, that's why, my hair remain dry and disheveled'. The Satan of the unbeliever expressed his regrets to him and said: 'I am being imposed on a person who does not do anything like your companion does. In one's eating, drinking, and dressing, I am one's equal partner'". Muhammed bin al-Wasay (May God have mercy upon him - a great Gnostic and saint) used to make this supplication every day for protection against Satan:



"O God! You have imposed upon us such an enemy who is well aware of our faults. He and his group watch us in such a way that we are not able to see them. O God! Make them so despair of us as You have made them despair of Your Mercy. Make him so hopeless of us like You have made him hopeless of Your forgiveness. Create so much distance and separation between him and us as You have created between them and Your Mercy. Verily, You are capable of everything".

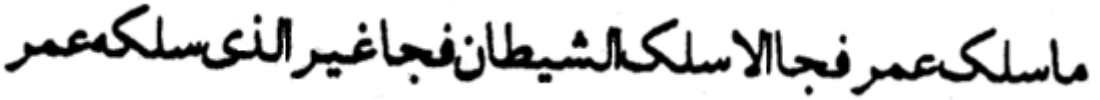
Muhammad al-Wasay (May God have mercy upon him) said: "Once I met Satan on my way to the *masjid* (mosque or place of worshipping and glorifying God) who asked me: 'Do you know me?' I said: 'No'. He said: 'I am *Iblis* (Satan or the leader of devils)'. I

asked him about the purpose of meeting me along the way like that and he said: 'My desire is that you do not teach this supplication to anyone else. I will never resist you'. I replied: 'I swear by God if someone wants to learn this supplication, I will not prevent one from learning. Go and do whatever your heart desires'". Abdur Rahman ibn Abi Laila (May God be pleased with him - a prophetic companion) said: "Satan used to come with a spark of fire in his hand in front of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) while he was praying. He did not go away from supplications and seeking refuge in God. Once archangel Gabriel (*Jibraeel* [May the Peace of God be upon him]) came and told him to recite the following supplication:

"I seek refuge in God through the means of His words that no one can exceed, whether [it's someone] good or bad, from the thing that enters into the earth and that which comes out of it and that ascends to heaven and that which descends from heaven, from the trials and tribulations of the day and the night, from the vicissitudes and tribulations of the night and the day except for the happening [of the night and the day] that comes laden with goodness, O Compassionate One!" (This tradition has been copied by Ibn Abi ad-Dunya in his book "*Maka-id ash-Shaytan*", by Imam Malik in [*Hadith* collection] *Muwatta* on the authority of [prophetic companion] Yahya ibn Sa'eed, and by Ibn Abdul Barr on the authority of [prophetic companion] Ibn Mas'ud [May God be pleased with him)

When Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) recited these words, they extinguished Satan's flame and he fell on the ground on his face. Hasan al-Basri (May God have mercy upon him - a great Gnostic and saint) said that Archangel Gabriel came to the prophet and told him: "A *Jinn* wants to deceive you so when you go to bed, recite the verse of the [Divine] Throne (called *Ayat al-Kursi* [Qur'an, Chapter 2, Verse 255])".

According to a prophetic tradition:



"Any path that Umar travels on, Satan runs away from that path and goes to a different path".

The reason for that was these distinguished persons' hearts were devoid of any food for Satan, in other words lusts did not pass through their hearts. If someone desires that Satan goes away from one, merely through God's remembrance as one moved away from Umar (May God be pleased with him) then that's impossible. Someone harboring this expectation is like the person who takes medications but shuns prevention [from harmful things that are counterproductive to taking medicines]. How can medicines be of benefit in that situation when stomach is filled up with harmful and unhealthy foods?

There is no time to get rid [of the harmful effects] of such food even though the medicine is transferred to different parts of the body to make it beneficial. Divine remembrance is like medicine and *Taqwa* (pious awe, reverence and fear of God that desists one from engaging in wrong and evil matters whether inner or outer) is prevention. The upshot of this prevention is that the heart should be devoid of desires and lusts from the lower self. Hence when Divine remembrance occurs in the heart devoid of anything besides God, Satan will run away from that [heart] just like the medicine when it goes into an empty stomach, illness and disease escapes from it. God says:

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَذِكْرَىٰ لِمَن كَانَ لَهُۥ قَلْبٌ

"In it is a great lesson for the one who has a [perceptive] heart." (Qur'an, Chapter 50, Verse 37)

God says in another place:

كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِ أَنَّهُۥ مَن تَوَلَّاهُ فَأَنَّهُۥ يُضِلُّهُۥ وَيَهْدِيهِ إِلَىٰ عَذَابِ ٱلسَّعِيرِ

"About whom (i.e., Satan) it has been written with God that whosoever will keep relations with him, he (Satan) will lead one astray and will show one the path of punishment of hell." (Qur'an, Chapter 22, Verse 4)

A person who helps Satan with one's [wrong, negative and evil] actions will be termed his friend and ally even though one may remember God with one's tongue [and may appear to be a good moral and religious person in one's outer demeanor].

Divine Remembrance by the Tongue is not Enough: If you say that a *Hadith* (prophetic narration) says that Divine remembrance (*Dhikr*) casts Satan away from one and it has no mentioning of any restrictions and conditions and all these specific details were invented by scholastic theologians and the prophetic narration does not convey that [specific] information, the answer to that objection that the Divine remembrance through the tongue alone is not effective, is that I invite you to look at your own self instead of providing you with an external argument. News and information conveyed to you is not at the same level as witnessing [with your own eyes] and you will see whether my claim is valid or not. Everyone knows that the objective of Divine remembrance and worship is prayers (*Salat* or required daily prayers as well as optional supererogatory prayers to God). When you pray, cast a glance at the condition of your heart. Satan takes your heart to innumerable places - roads, alleys, marketplaces, entertainment centers, etc., and moves your thoughts through diverse things and reminds it of innumerable things to such an extent that he reminds you of even the things you have completely forgotten about [all during prayers when you should be focused on God alone as your sole point of focus, to be able to truly derive spiritual benefits from it, the foremost of which is the inculcation of a deep inner connection with God and resulting Gnosis of the Divine].

Satan surely attacks your heart in the state of prayers. [What happens during] Other acts of Divine remembrance and worship can be deduced from [the aforementioned situation one faces during] prayers. Prayer is the criterion of the hearts that reveals the

praiseworthy qualities and faults of the hearts. Prayers of the hearts, that have become centers of worldly lusts, are not accepted. Such prayers do not repel Satan, instead they facilitate the possibility of increase in insinuations and persuasions [from Satan] just like medications without prevention do more harm than good. If you want to get rid of Satan, then first adopt the prevention of *Taqwa* (pious awe, reverence and fear of God that desists one from engaging in wrong and evil matters whether inner or outer) then after that, use the medicine of Divine remembrance (*Dhikr*). Satan will be afraid of you as he used to be afraid of Umar (May God be pleased with him). Wahab bin Munabbih (May God have mercy upon him - a saint and Gnostic) said: "Fear God and don't call Satan bad on the outside while you are his friend on the inside in terms of obeying him". One saint said: "It is surprising for the people to disobey their Benefactor (God) despite knowing His favors upon them and obeying the accursed (Satan) despite knowing his rebellion". Just like you make a supplication and it is not accepted even though God has said "Call upon Me, I will respond to your call", likewise Satan does not get repelled away from you, despite your Divine remembrance. It is because there the conditions of supplications [to be Divinely accepted] were absent and here, the conditions of Divine remembrance are absent. Someone asked Ibrahim bin Adham (May God have mercy upon him - a great saint and Gnostic) the same question: "Why do our supplications not get [Divinely] accepted even though God has promised [their acceptance in the Qur'an]?" He replied: "It is because your hearts are dead". They asked: "What has caused the death of our hearts?" He replied: "Eight qualities of yours have caused the death of the heart: Firstly, you came to know the rights of God over you but you have not fulfilled His rights; secondly, you read the Qur'an but you do not act on its limits [of acceptable and non-acceptable behaviors and actions both inner and outer]; thirdly, you claim to love the Messenger of God (Prophet Muhammad [Peace and blessings of God be upon him]) but you do not follow his way [of righteousness and devotion to God]; fourthly, you say that that you are afraid of death but you do not prepare for it; fifthly, God says:

إِنَّ ٱلشَّيْطَٰنَ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ فَٱتَّخِذُوهُ عَدُوًّا

'Verily, Satan is your [real] enemy so take him as your enemy'. (Qur'an, Chapter 35, Verse 6)

But you have extended a hand of friendship towards him by committing sins (transgression against the Divine limits); sixthly, you express your fear of hell but perform those actions that make your entry into it certain; seventhly, you are desirous of heaven but do not perform [good, righteous] actions that take you there; eighthly, when you rise up from your beds, you put your own faults behind your backs and get involved in finding faults with others. All these traits are the cause of Divine displeasure. In their presence, having expectation of acceptance of your supplications is futile".

Wuhaib ibn al-Ward (May God have mercy upon him - a Gnostic and saint) said: "We have come to know that Satan once appeared before Prophet Yahya (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) (also known as John) and said: 'I want to give you an advice'. He said: 'I am in no need of your advice. However, tell me something about the humans (i.e., what kind of humans you deal with)?' He said: 'There are three types

of humans. One kind of people are such that they are very hard on us. When we go to them and get them involved in a sinful situation and get them in our control, they immediately seek repentance after committing sins and this way they ruin all our hard work. We work hard again, and they repeat the same thing again (i.e., they repent for their wrongdoings). Our situation is so strange that we are neither despair of them nor we are able to get our way with them. Second type of humans are like a ball in the hand of a kid as we can turn them around the way we want. These people give us full recompense for our hard work. Third type of people are like you – pious natured, innocent, and far from sins. We cannot overcome them'".

Satan Appearing Physically in Front of Human Beings: The questions arise here: "How does Satan appears physically before [some] people while it does not appear before others and when he appears, is that his real appearance or metaphorical appearance? If that is his real appearance, it appears in various appearances and how he is seen in two different appearances in two places so that two people see him in two different appearances?" It needs to be stated in that respect that devils and angels have real appearances but not everyone is capable of witnessing their real appearances, instead, they can be seen with the light of the prophethood. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) saw Archangel Gabriel in his true form just twice - once he himself requested him to show him his real form and he (Gabriel) promised to do so and appeared in his original form in Mount Hira [in Mecca] and the entire horizon from west to east was filled with his being; second time, he appeared in his original form on the night of the Prophet's heavenly ascension (*Mi'raj*) at *Sidrat al-Muntaha* (a Lote tree that marks the end of the seventh heaven, the boundary where no creation can pass, according to Islamic beliefs) and Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) saw him. Generally, the Prophet has seen him in human form. Gabriel often came in the form of Dahya Kalbi (May God be pleased with him - a Prophetic companion who was known for his good looks) [according to a Prophetic narration or *Hadith* in collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*].

Most people of the heart (spirituality) have the *Mukashfa* (spiritual unveiling) in such a way that the example of their real form appears before them. Hence Satan comes in front of them in the state of wakefulness. They see and hear him. This example of actual form becomes a substitute of the actual form. Many righteous people encounter this situation in their dreams [as opposed to the state of wakefulness]. A person of spiritual unveiling (*Kashf*) is the one whose usage of external senses does not impede spiritual unveilings. In other words, what is known to others through dreams is seen by them in wakefulness. Umar bin Abdul-Aziz (May God have mercy upon him) narrated that a man prayed to God to show him the place inside the human heart where Satan resides. He then saw in a dream the human body as a transparent glass through which what's in there can be seen from the outside. He saw Satan in the form of a frog sitting on the left shoulder between shoulder joint and ear. He had a thin and long trunk that he inserted in the heart of human being and was insinuating through that. When that person remembered God, Satan would remove his truck from the heart. Sometimes this observation happens during wakefulness. That's why, some people of spiritual

unveilings have seen Satan in the form of a dog lying on carcass and inviting people to it. Carcass is an example of the world. This type of witnessing is the substitute of the original form. This has been stated before that heart has two sides. One side faces the "'*Alam al-Malakoot*" or angelic realm - this side is the entry point for Divine revelations (*Wahi*), Divine inspiration (*Ilham*) and spiritual signs and allusions (*Isharaat*). Second side [of the heart] faces the "'*Alam al-Zahir*" or realm of the seen. However, since both sides are attached to each other, the influence of the side facing the angelic realm is seen on the side facing the visible realm.

Things in the visible realm are seen in their perceived forms and appearances because the entire visible realm is perceptible. It is possible in perceptions that the form that comes to one's heart through external senses may not be in accordance with their true [intrinsic] nature. Hence, a person apparently seems beautiful but it's not necessary that his or her outer beauty is in accordance with the inner beauty. One can be an ugly person from within. The visible realm is only the perception of reality [as opposed to the reality]. However, the form and appearance that manifests itself in thought through the shine and brilliance of the angelic realm, is [always] subservient to and in accordance with its true intrinsic nature. Hence, what's ugly in the inside will appear as bad on the outside. That's why Satan appears in the form of dog, frog, and swine while angels appear in good forms. This [beautiful] form is due to the [inner] meaning and is the true picture of the inner. That is the reason why seeing someone in dream as dog or monkey argues about one's inner evil and seeing one as a goat argues about one being good-natured. Such is the situation with interpretation of dreams. This matter is related to the secrets of the heart and there is no need to mention it in the knowledge about the practical spirituality. The sole reason for bringing up this topic here is to develop this certitude that Satan and angels sometimes appear to people of the heart as an example and analogy in sleep and sometimes as their true reality. It often happens that an example or analogous form is seen that resembles the inner reality. Even though the form is an example or analogy but its witnessing with the eye is real, however, only people of spiritual unveilings can see it while people around one cannot see it. Just like the person asleep can see a dream while people around one [who are not asleep] cannot see it.

Heart's Insinuations, Superstitions, Dangers, and Intentions

Actions of the heart go through many stages before they are acted upon by the bodily organs. The first thing that dawns upon the heart is called "*Khatir*" or thought. For example, heart conceives the thought of someone who can be seen by turning around if one wants [to see]. Secondly, the desire to see gets instigated, i.e., the lust in one's temperament becomes active. This desire is first born out of a thought that is called inclination [of one's heart or temperament] and the first thought is called the "narration of the lower self" (*Hadeeth al-Nafs*). Thirdly, the permission of the heart for this inclination, for example, the command of the heart to see that person. Sometimes, the inclination of the heart is there but certain impediments like shame and fear do not allow the heart to see. These impediments are removed through hesitation and the intellect

makes a decision. This act is called belief. Fourthly, one has the firm determination to see which is called resolve or intention. The basis of this intention is sometimes weak but when the heart gets fully focused on the first thought then this resolve becomes firm, intention strong and determination unshakable. Sometimes, despite the firmness of intention, one is not able to commit the action due to regret, sometimes due to heedlessness one is not focused on action, sometimes an impediment comes up that prevents the practical implementation of an intention despite one's desire.

Four States of the Heart Before Performing an Action: Upshot is that there are four states of the heart before performing an action: narration of the lower self (*Hadeeth al-Nafs*), inclination of the heart, belief, and determination. As far as the [first] thought or "narration from the lower self" is concerned, there is no accountability for it as it is outside the control of a human being. The same applies for the inclination of the heart as this state is also not within one's control. These two states are meant in the saying of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) that the matters of the heart for my nation have been forgiven. "Narration from the lower self" refers to the thoughts that occur to the heart that one has no intention to act on them. Intention and determination are not what's referred to by "narration from the lower self".

The third state of the heart is called "belief", in other words, heart makes a determination that performing a certain action is acceptable. This belief can either be conscious (willfully adopted) or subconscious (entered into the heart subconsciously without one's own desire). There is [Divine] reckoning and accountability for the conscious one but not for the subconscious one. Fourth condition of the heart is the intention and determination to perform an action which is liable to accountability and reckoning. If for some reason, one is not able to perform the action then it will be seen whether desisting from the action was due to shame or fear of God. If shame or fear of God prevented one from carrying out one's intended action then one righteous act will be written for one because resolving to carry out a sin is a sin and to desist from carrying out a sinful intention and struggling against the desires from one's lower base self is a righteous act [worthy of Divine acceptance]. If one intended to commit a sin, being subdued by insistence of the lower self, then this does not represent avoidance and heedlessness of God but [instead] reneging the intention of sin by struggling against one's lower self is certainly a great thing. If one intended sin by following Satan, then refraining from it by opposing one's [inner] inclination [thus performing an inner spiritual struggle against wrong and evil] makes one deserving of a good righteous deed. However, if one could not carry out the intention [to commit evil] due to some impediment [without desisting one's lower self and still desiring to commit evil] then one bad deed will be written for one because the intention of the heart is in one's control. The narration of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) that argues about this is as follows:

قالت الملائكة عليهم السلام، رب ذاك عبدك يريد ان يعمل سيئة و هو ابصر به
فقال: ارقبوه فان هو عملها فاكتبوها له بمثلها و ان تركها فاكتبوها له حسنة و انما
تركها من جرائي

"Angels say this to God: 'O God! This servant of Yours wants to commit sin'. [Although God knows about one's state more than anyone else,] He says: 'Keep a watch over one. If one carries out one's intention, then write one evil deed [in one's account of deeds] equivalent to one's action. If one refrains from pursuing action on one's [evil] intention, then write one good deed in one's account because one left this sin because of Me'". (This tradition has been narrated in *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of [prophetic companion] Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him])

Another prophetic narration states:

انما يحشر الناس على نياتهم

"People will be raised up [on the Day of Judgment] upon their intentions". (This tradition has been narrated in *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Umm Salma and Aisha [May God be pleased with them])

This tradition shows that if one makes the intention to do something and dies before implementing it then one would have died on that intention and will be raised up on that intention even though one did not carry out that sin. This matter is clearly expounded upon by the following tradition of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him):

اذا التقى المسلمان بسيفيهما فالقاتل و المقتول في النار، فقيل يا رسول
الله هذا القاتل فما بال المقتول، قال لانه اراد قتل صاحبه

"'When two Muslims confront each other with their swords stretched out [in a combat to kill each other] then the murderer and the murdered will both go to hell'. Prophet was asked: 'O Prophet of God! Murderer going to hell makes sense but why the murdered (victim) will go to hell?' He replied: 'It's because he also intended to kill the other'". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of [Prophetic companion] Abu Bakra [May God be pleased with him])

One cannot assume after this explanation that God with not reckon on the intentions of the heart. In this connection, the principle to remember is that every willful intention and resolve is subject to reckoning. This explanation also proves that there is no reckoning and accountability on matters that are beyond human control and capacity. Some people don't make a difference between various actions of the heart and term everything that comes into the heart a "narration from lower self" or "thought". This

opinion of theirs is not valid. Why there would be no reckoning on [various] actions of the heart when arrogance, self-righteousness (or self-aggrandizement), ostentation, jealousy, etc. [that are extremely harmful for individual and collective well being] are actions of the heart and verses [from Quran] and prophetic narrations prove that there is reckoning and accountability for them. Truth of the matter is that all actions that are within the capacity of a servant [of God, i.e., a human being] will be subjected to reckoning and accountability. Hence, if a glance fell on a non-*Mahrem* (potentially marriageable according to the Divine law) woman unintentionally then there is no reckoning for it but if the second glance is to be casted intentionally and willfully then it will be subjected to [Divine] reckoning. Such is the state of the thoughts of the heart. Rather, this reckoning should be of the heart first since heart is the real thing [i.e., heart is the basis and reality of human being].

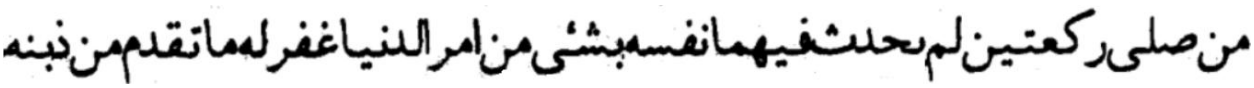
Types of Insinuations: There are several kinds of insinuations:

First Kind – Invitation to Truth and Right: One type [of insinuation] is that Satan instills it [into the hearts] to make truth doubtful. For example, he will say to someone: "One should not leave worldly pleasures because life is long and to restrain wishes for a long time is an arduous task requiring a lot of patience". At this point, if the servant [of God, i.e., a human being] considers God's tremendous rights, lofty rewards and painful punishments and makes one's heart understand that life could be long but compared to the afterlife, it is indeed insignificant and all worldly pleasures are fleeting and transitory even though ostensibly, it is difficult to be patient with them but compared to the hellfire, it's not difficult at all. One of the two is essential: if one tolerates the hardship of exercising patience on [not going after] worldly pleasures then one will not have to tolerate the hardship of the hell, and if one did not exercise patience on the world then one will need to face the hardship of the Hereafter. Nevertheless, remembrance and reminders of God's promises, warnings and revitalization of faith and certitude, forces Satan to escape because he cannot say that hellfire is easier than patience on sins or committing sins do not lead to the hell. Even if he were to make such claims, the believing servant will not trust such promises [from Satan] due to one's faith in the book of God (Divine injunctions and the light of reason). Likewise, if he insinuates self-conceitedness that no one has more Gnosis of God than you, nor there is an example of the like of your worship and that you have high status before God. At this point, the servant should think that Gnosis, worship, high spiritual status [before God], all organs that acted and all actions through which one acquired Gnosis, all are creations of God and are His bestowed upon wealth and that one has no personal excellence in them. After this thought, there is no room left for self-righteousness, self-conceitedness, self-praise and vainglory, and Satan receives a humiliating defeat because he cannot say that these are not the creations of God. Even if he claims that, a servant's Gnosis and faith will never allow one to believe that. This kind of insinuation gets completely

eradicated from the hearts of the possessors of the light of faith and Gnosis, and the knowers of God (Gnostics), through Divine remembrance.

Second Kind – Inflaming Passions and Lusts: Second kind of insinuation is that Satan stirs up lusts. This is also of two types. One is that the servant is aware of the lust being a sin with certitude. Second is that one knows about it through a dominant conjecture. In case of certitude, Satan will not desist from instigating the lust, but he will not be able to make this instigation effective. If it's not certain but is a conjecture, Satan's instigation can be effective. In this case, spiritual struggle will be needed to eradicate it. This type of insinuation does not fully end at the time of Divine remembrance, however, it's not able to dominate either.

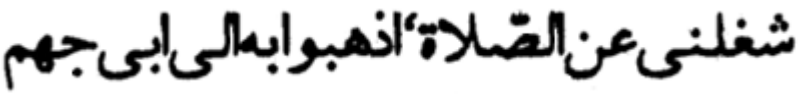
Third Kind – Passing Thoughts: Third kind of insinuation is just passing thoughts and remembrance of hidden matters that happens during prayers. Hence, when one engages in Divine remembrance (*Dhikr*) then these passing thoughts end for a short while then they come back then again come to an end. Sometimes the advent of passing thoughts is unceasing and continuous, such that it seems that thoughts and Divine remembrance are two rings in the same chain. This happens to such an extent that sometimes passing thoughts come simultaneously with meanings of the recitation [of Quran] as if the heart has two separate spaces for both and both can coexist simultaneously. Such insinuation is difficult to cut off entirely but not impossible because Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessing of God be upon him) said:



"One who performs two cycles of prayers in such a way that one's lower self (*Nafs*) does not talk about the worldly matters then all of one's previous sins would be forgiven".

If it had not been possible to not have any insinuation in the heart, then the Prophet (Peace be upon him) would not have mentioned it. It is not the case with every heart [to be devoid of any insinuation] but it can be imagined only with the heart that has the love of God dominating it to such an extent that no other thought comes to it. Just like a true lover does not have any other thought in the heart besides that of the beloved, likewise if someone is worried about an enemy then one is so engrossed in one's thought and the thought of [the enemy] harming one that it does not even go away during prayers nor does one remember the amount of cycles one has prayed and what one has recited in each cycle of prayers. This [engrossment and absorption in such thoughts] is to such an extent that one does not even notices if someone passes by even though the eyes are open and looking at the passerby. Engrossment in worldly matters can be such that the fear of hell and desire for Paradise would foster such engrossment [we can then imagine how engrossing the Divine love could be]. However, due to weakness of faith, this state is not common.

Upshot [of this discussion] is that it is possible to get rid of Satan for a few moments but not for the entire lifetime. If someone could have been safe and protected from insinuations and instigations of Satan, it would have been the noble personality of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) but tradition says that during prayers, when his glance fell on some patterns and designs on his clothes, after he prayed, he just threw away those clothes and said:



"This [dress] engaged me from prayers so take it back to Abu Jahm (Prophetic companion who gifted the dress)".

A similar incident happened with a gold ring resulting in Prophet (Peace be upon him) throwing it away (*Hadith* narrated by *Nasa'i* on the authority of Abdullah ibn Abbas [May God be pleased with him]). The divided attention and focus [during prayers preventing the Prophet (Peace be upon him) from full focus on God] due to design patterns on dress and the gold ring was an act of Satan's insinuation. It should be reminded that the incident involving a gold ring occurred prior to the Divine prohibition of gold for men. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) wore the gold ring because it was allowed at that time [before its subsequent prohibition]. He took it off because it was engendering insinuations and insinuations related to worldly properties and possessions can only be eradicated by removing them from ourselves.

As long as one possesses more than needed possessions, Satan will surely involve one in insinuation even though that extra possession is just a *Dirham* or *Dinar* (old gold and silver currencies respectively). The form of insinuation in that case would be that Satan will keep one worried and anxious about their protection and will advise one on where to spend it and how to hide it so that others would not learn about its presence or to reveal it in such a way that people will accept one's superiority. These and other insinuations like them will keep one worried. One who desires to be saved from Satan after clutching the carcass of material wealth with the claws of greed, is like the one who has fallen in honey and expects flies to not sit on one. This is not just one door but innumerable doors through which the armies of Satan, laden with the weight of insinuations, continuously and unceasingly come in and go out [as they please]. One wise person (sage) has said that Satan comes to one through the way of sin. If this way is closed, he adopts the path of advice and gets one involved in matters that deviate one from the Divine guidance (*Bid'a*). If that path is closed, Satan leads one to the path of [self-imposed] hardships, constriction, and extremism such that one even forbids for oneself things that are not forbidden (*Haram*). If one closes that path too, Satan involves one in doubts and misgivings about ablution (*Wudu*, i.e., bodily purification required to enter into the spiritual state of formal prayers) and prayers. If one closes even that path [for Satan to enter], Satan makes good righteous deeds easy on one. When people start to draw close to one thinking of one as pious, patient, innocent and a

possessor of moral rectitude, Satan gets one involved in self-righteousness, self-praise, self-aggrandizement and vainglory *('Ujub*) and destroys one with that. Here Satan spends all he possesses in his power and might, as this is his very last opportunity that he does not want to miss as he knows that if he missed it, his prey will not be entrapped in his [hunting] net and instead, will go straight to the Heaven.

Rapid Changes in Heart and Types of Heart in that Respect

As mentioned before, heart is surrounded by different contrasting qualities. It is like a target on which a rainstorm of arrows are shot from all sides. If one thing has its impact on it then something else comes and dissipates its impact. Satan pulls it towards desires of the lower self. Angel pulls it in an opposite direction. One Satan pulls it towards one evil and another Satan pulls it towards another evil. Likewise, one angel calls it towards one good deed then another angel calls it to another. Sometimes that heart is involved in struggle between two angels and sometimes between two Satans and sometimes between angel and Satan. It does not have any moment of peace and quite when it's not pre-occupied. Following verse alludes to the same state of the heart:

وَنُقَلِّبُ أَفْـِٔدَتَهُمْ وَأَبْصَـٰرَهُمْ

"And We will turn away their hearts and sights". (Qur'an, Chapter 6, Verse 110)

It is because Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) was aware of God's wonderous creation in the wonders of the heart and was aware that this piece of flesh is always in a transient, evanescent and ever-changing state. That's why he used to swear:

ومقلب القلوب

"I swear by the Changer of the hearts (i.e., God)". (This tradition has been narrated in *Sahih Bukhari* on the authority of [prophetic companion] Abdullah ibn Umar [May God be pleased with him])

He used to make the following supplication abundantly:

يَا مُقَلِّبَ الْقُلُوبِ ثَبِّتْ قَلْبِي عَلَى دِينِكَ

"O You Who Changes the Hearts! Keep my heart firm on Your path".

People asked him: "O Messenger of God! Do you also have apprehensions about your heart?" He replied:

وما يؤمنني والقلب بين اصبعين من اصابع الرحمٰن يقلبه كيف يشاء

"For what reason should I become fearless while the heart is in between the two fingers of the Merciful One (God) Who can flip it around the way He wants?"

The changeability of the heart and God's mysteries in it can only be perceived by the people who are ever watchful over it and are continuously in a state of contemplation.

Three Types of the Heart in Terms of its Changeability and Stability: There are three types of heart in terms of its stability on either good or evil or remaining hesitant in between the two:

Heart Filled with the Light of Pious Awe, Reverence and Fear of God (*Taqwa*): One heart is such that it is brimming with the light of pious awe, reverence and fear of God (*Taqwa*) and has been cleansed of all low and vile inner characteristics. Such type of heart receives good thoughts from the treasuries of the unseen realm and from the angelic realm (*'Alam al-Malakoot*). Intellect contemplates on them to perceive their subtleties, intricacies, secrets, and benefits. When the light of insight (*Baseerah*) reveals something good as good then the intellect decides about its importance and persuades the heart to act upon it. When angel [responsible for bringing in the Divine light into the heart] sees that the essence of the heart is purified and cleansed, light of intellect and sound reasoning has illumined it, illuminating rays of light of the fear of God [acting as a moral restraint against everything negative, vile and injurious to oneself and others] are falling everywhere and the lamp of the Divine Gnosis is burning, no doubt such heart is the abode of angels where they descend and stay, then the angel aids the armies of the unseen and helps one with acting on many goods righteous deeds until righteousness and deeds that nurture it, become innate second nature as God says:

"So the one who gave [in charity seeking the Countenance of one's Lord] and had pious awe, reverence and fear of God and believed in the truth of the right thing (path to God), We will create ease for such a one." (Qur'an, Chapter 92, Verse 5-7)

Such hearts have profuse illumination from the court of Divine Lordship that even [the subtle evils like] hidden polytheism does not remain hidden from the eyes, that is more subtle than a dark black ant crawling in a dark black night [thus sensitivity to anything that is vile or negative to the slightest level, increases serving as a vanguard against it]. Satan's deception is not effective on such hearts. He tries his level best to deceive and defraud through his sophisticated talk but the servant [of God, i.e., a righteous person] does not even pay the slightest attention to it. Such heart becomes adorned with salvific and auspicious inner qualities (*Munjiyaat*) after eradicating inner destructive qualities (*Muhlikaat* or fatal inner qualities that bring about destruction of one's heart

and soul). These salvific inner qualities include gratitude to God [for His innumerable blessings granted to all even without asking], patience [against all adversities as it propels one to higher levels of spiritual awareness], pious awe, reverence and fear of God (*Taqwa*), optimism and hope from God (*Rija*), spiritual poverty (*Faqr* or neediness of God under all circumstances), abstinence from materialism (*Zuhd*), love of God (*Mahabba*), contentment with Divine decree (*Rida*), eagerness and fondness of God and desire to be with Him (*Shawq*), trust in God (*Tawakkul*), deep contemplation in Divinely created wonders and mysteries both material and spiritual to inculcate Divine love (*Tafakkur*), taking oneself to task for one's own shortcomings in Divine worship, obedience and striving in the spiritual path to achieve one's real purpose of life (*Ihtisaab*), etc. God's attention is on such a heart and that's the heart that is mentioned in below verse:

أَلَا بِذِكْرِ ٱللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ ٱلْقُلُوبُ

"Verily, hearts find tranquility [and inner peace] in God's remembrance." (Qur'an, Chapter 13, Verse 28)

يَٰٓأَيَّتُهَا ٱلنَّفْسُ ٱلْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ﴿٢٧﴾ ٱرْجِعِىٓ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً ﴿٢٨﴾

"O the soul at rest abiding in eternal peace and tranquility! Return to your Lord [to the immensity of His Mercy and Largesse] in such a state that you are pleased with Him and He is pleased with you." (Qur'an, Chapter 89, Verses 27-28)

Heart Brimming with Desires from the Lower Self: Second type of heart is the opposite of the first type. In other words, it is brimming with desires from the lower base self and is tainted with reprehensible habits [and propensities]. The doors of this heart are open for Satan and closed for the angels. The start of evil in this type of heart happens with imagining the desire from the lower self, followed by hesitation for indulging in sin and evil. Heart consults with the ruler which is the intellect. Since the intellect has already been a slave of the lower self and is very inured and attached to it, it decides in its favor and provides means for the justification [for matter being contemplated that is wrong, vile, and injurious]. In this manner, the lower base self (*Nafs*) captures the heart [and takes complete control of it] that helps it with the sin. One's heart opens up to the desires from the lower self and the darkness of greed starts to spread everywhere because the army of the intellect has already lost its power of resistance and surrendered its complete control to the lower base self [which is intrinsically inclined to wrong and evil]. Circle of Satan's dominion extends further, who entangles and entraps the heart in outer extravagance [through conspicuous consumption], deception and fraud, and false hopes and insinuates other matters like that. Consequently, the dominion of faith [in God and Divine guidance leading to moral rectitude that serves as a bulwark against all excesses] weakens and the illuminating lamp of certitude [in the veracity of Divine guidance that leads one towards

righteousness] extinguishes. In other words, faith and certitude in Divine promises, heaven and hell and Hereafter comes to an end. Desires from the lower self are like smoke that surrounds the heart from all directions and extinguishes the lamp of faith and certitude. Intellect gets into such a state as if a person's eye is filled with smoke and it loses the capability to see. The domination of lusts [of various kinds - material, immaterial and carnal] removes from the heart its capacity to think and contemplate and its insight, and it (heart) becomes so oblivious to guidance [about the correct path in life] that even if an admonisher wants to advise about something good then one is not even able to comprehend it. Following verses are alluding to the same heart:

أَرَءَيْتَ مَنِ ٱتَّخَذَ إِلَٰهَهُۥ هَوَىٰهُ أَفَأَنتَ تَكُونُ عَلَيْهِ وَكِيلًا ﴿٤٣﴾

أَمْ تَحْسَبُ أَنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ أَوْ يَعْقِلُونَ ۚ إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا كَٱلْأَنْعَٰمِ ۖ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ سَبِيلًا ﴿٤٤﴾

"O Prophet! Have you seen the state of the person who has made a god out of one's desires from the lower self [as if one is paying obeisance to such a deity]? So, can you watch over such a person [to save one from harming oneself]? Or do you think that most among such folks listen and understand? [No, rather] They are just like cattle, rather even more deviant from the [right] path [as they are even devoid of the capability to see what is right and wrong, beneficial and harmful, felicitous and destructive, and injurious and salubrious]." (Qur'an, Chapter 25, Verse 43-44)

لَقَدْ حَقَّ ٱلْقَوْلُ عَلَىٰٓ أَكْثَرِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

"It has been proven on most of them that they will not believe [in the truth]." (Qur'an, Chapter 36, Verse 7)

سَوَآءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَأَنذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

"[O Prophet! It makes no difference] Whether you warn them or not [about the repercussions of indulging in wrong actions], they will not believe [in the truth]." (Qur'an, Chapter 2, Verse 6)

Some hearts have the same state in all types of lusts, some get involved in certain lusts and some do not even go close to any lusts. For example, some people stay away from common sins but when they see a beautiful face, they are not able to control themselves and leave the intellect behind and get involved in wrong related to it. Some people are so hungry for power, fame, and position [indicative of a higher social status] that when an opportunity arises of its obtainment, they run madly after it. Some people cannot hear about their own faults and cannot tolerate their insult. If someone says even a word [against them], they become furious with rage. Some people remain observant of God-fear (*Taqwa*) and cleanliness (*Tahara*) but when it comes to dealing with money, they shred into pieces all the raiment of God-fear and Divine exaltation and

fell on wealth and property like a dog pouncing on a bone. All these sins are committed by hearts that are enveloped by the smoke of stubborn wrong-headed folly (*Hawa*) from the lower self (*Nafs*), the luminosity of inner insight diminishes, shyness [or modesty that acts as a moral restraint against all forms of licentiousness and vile] and faith departs, and these people get engaged in completing Satan's purpose and objective.

Heart in between Lust and Faith: Third type of heart has thoughts born in it from the stubborn wrong-headed folly or desires from the lower self that invite it to evil. At the same time, thoughts from the faith [in eternal verities] arrive and invite it to good and righteousness. Lower self with all its lusts is inclined towards evil thoughts, instigates the lusts, and narrates the excellence of pleasure and comfort seeking. Intellect aids the thoughts of righteousness, criticizes lusts and tells the lower self that this [matter being pondered upon] is a work of ignorance and resembles the actions of animals and wild beasts because they fell on evil without even caring about the consequences. If self is inclined towards the advice of the intellect, Satan abandons chasing the lower self and goes after the intellect and that's how it strengthens the factors tied to lusts. Satan tells the intellect: "Why do you constrict your self for no reason? Why did you set aside your desires? Is there someone among your contemporaries who is opposed to one's desires and forsakes one's needs? They are getting their share of the worldly pleasures and in your lot, there is only constriction [and restraint from the good life]. They are fortunate while you are deprived, unfortunate, beset with troubles. People of the world make fun of you and give examples of others who have followed the path I told them to tread and achieved great positions [and fame]. Why don't you follow their footsteps? Do you not see such and such scholars that they do such and such things and if these were bad things then why they (holy and religious people) would have done it [in the first place]?" [As a result of this forceful and seemingly logical and convincing persuasions,] The lower self gets inclined towards Satan. At this very instance, angel blocks the path of the lower self and tells it: "A person who in order to gain the pleasures of the present, becomes oblivious to the final outcome and conclusion of all matters, gets destroyed. Are you willing to leave the perpetual blessings and joys of heaven due to relying on these [ephemeral worldly] pleasures that will last for a few days only? Do you deem the torment of hell easier than having patience on [restraining from] lusts? Don't follow the people and don't be deceived by Satan. Sins of other people cannot lessen the pain of your punishment. If you get a comfortable and cool home at the time of intense summer and heatwave, would you still be with the people [who are busy relishing the ephemeral worldly pleasures] or would prefer the home where the bodies do not melt with the intensity of heat from the sun and where hot blows of air do not inflame the body? Your state in the world (earthly existence) is such that you cannot endure the heat of the sun. You cannot [even] stand in it then it's unknown what is preventing you from having fear of the hell? Is the heat of the hell less than the heat of the sun?" With this advice, the self becomes inclined towards the angel. In short, the tussle and the struggle between the angel and Satan continues and, in this tussle, one covers the milestones of one's life. Sometimes satanic qualities dominate and the lower self becomes totally inclined towards Satan and becomes his

associate and helper. It avoids the group of the Compassionate One (God) and all those actions are performed through one's bodily organs that have been sealed by the pre-ordained destiny and [these actions are such] that take one away from God. When [noble] qualities from the angelic realm dominate, then the self does not get caught in the entrapments of Satan and annihilates his deception. One does not show laziness in matters of the Hereafter but instead pays obeisance to the group of the Merciful One (God) and such actions are performed by one's bodily organs that bring about the Divine acceptance and approval. This also happens in accordance with the pre-ordained destiny. The [aforementioned] prophetic narration that "the heart of a believer is in between the two fingers of the Compassionate One (God)" alludes to the same tussle that is ongoing between the two adversaries. Such hearts are not permanently inclined towards any one of the [two] groups but instead, the act of revolution and change continues in such hearts [as they are the battlefields of an arduous struggle and combat between the forces of good and evil].

Acts of obedience and contraventions [to the Divine commandments] all appear in the realm of physical existence from the treasuries of the unseen and the heart becomes a means of bringing them about because heart is a treasure from the treasuries of the unseen and transcendent angelic realm. People of the heart use this appearance to get a deep understanding of [Divinely ordained] destiny. Those who have been created for heaven are provided with the means of [Divine] obedience, and those who have been made for hell have been provided with the means of disobedience and are provided with the company of bad friends, and in their hearts are created the satanic insinuations.

Satan makes fool out of people quite excessively by giving reference of Divine Mercy and Largesse. He also tells them that there is plenty of life left so continue to commit sins then repent [later towards the end of a long life]. He also tells them that there is no shortage of God-fearing folks and if you oppose their way then nothing bad will happen. Qur'an has painted an accurate picture of his [false and misleading] promises:

يَعِدُهُمْ وَيُمَنِّيهِمْ ۖ وَمَا يَعِدُهُمُ ٱلشَّيْطَٰنُ إِلَّا غُرُورًا

"Satan makes promises to them and make them greedy [with hopes of long life] and Satan only makes false promises to them." (Qur'an, Chapter 4, Verse 120)

It means that he promises repentance and arouses hopes of forgiveness and gets people destroyed with such excuses and machinations. People get influenced by Satan's deception and accept his arguments and [consequently] their hearts become constricted by the directives of the eternal destiny as God has said:

فَمَن يُرِدِ ٱللَّهُ أَن يَهْدِيَهُۥ يَشْرَحْ صَدْرَهُۥ لِلْإِسْلَٰمِ ۖ وَمَن يُرِدْ أَن يُضِلَّهُۥ
يَجْعَلْ صَدْرَهُۥ ضَيِّقًا حَرَجًا كَأَنَّمَا يَصَّعَّدُ فِى ٱلسَّمَآءِ

"So for whom God wishes to guide, He expands one's heart to submission to the Divine Will (*Islam*), and for whom God wishes to lead astray [from the path of Divine guidance and eternal truth], He makes one's heart severely constricted as if one is climbing to the heaven." (Qur'an, Chapter 6, Verse 125)

إِن يَنصُرۡكُمُ ٱللَّهُ فَلَا غَالِبَ لَكُمۡۖ وَإِن يَخۡذُلۡكُمۡ فَمَن ذَا ٱلَّذِي يَنصُرُكُم مِّنۢ بَعۡدِهِۦۗ

"If God helps you then none can dominate you and if He does not help you then after that, who is there who can help you? And only in God, believers should put their trust in." (Qur'an, Chapter 3, Verse 160)

It is learned from these verses that God alone is the granter of guidance and He alone is the One who misguides (hence the need to avoid everything that leads to Divine displeasure with one and with one's actions]:

يَفۡعَلُ مَا يَشَآءُ وَ يَحۡكُمُ مَا يُرِيدُ

"God does what He wishes and decides what He wishes."

No one can avoid His command, nor can one reject His decision. He created the heaven and the people who are deserving of it and made them tread the path of [Divine] obedience. He also created the hell and the people who are deserving of it and made them tread the path of [Divine] disobedience and told His servants the signs of those deserving heaven and hell and made this announcement:

إِنَّ ٱلۡأَبۡرَارَ لَفِي نَعِيمٖ ١٣ وَإِنَّ ٱلۡفُجَّارَ لَفِي جَحِيمٖ ١٤

"The pious and righteous will be in blessings and comfort and verily the vile will be in hell." (Qur'an, Chapter 82, Verses 13-14)

God is Exalted and Supreme:

لَا يُسۡـَٔلُ عَمَّا يَفۡعَلُ وَهُمۡ يُسۡـَٔلُونَ

"He cannot be questioned for what He does, and others can be questioned for what they do." (Qur'an, Chapter 21, Verse 23)

This brief account on the wonders of the heart will suffice and to say more than that on this topic is not suitable in relation with the exoteric knowledge (knowledge of external matters or *Ilm al-Mu'amla*). The purpose of what has been mentioned here is also to familiarize those to the secrets and intricacies of exoteric knowledge (*Uloom al-Mu'amla*) who do not wish to be contended with externalities (outer import of this knowledge) and prefer the pith (inner essence) over the outer shell and have eagerness for [inner] complexities of realities. It is hoped that this brief exposition will quench their thirst [for eternal truths] and be of benefit to them.

Chapter 2 - Spiritual Struggle for Purification of the Soul, Acquisition of Illumined Inner Qualities and Curing the Inner Darkness and Diseases of the Soul

Ghazali's second book in the third volume or quarter of his *magnum opus* "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God" deals with curing the diseases of the soul and striving through spiritual rigors to achieve that purpose. That in turn propels the soul to higher levels of refinement, awareness, spiritual ascendence and Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*) as a personal imperative for each and every human being to ward off disasters at individual and collective levels and bring about the transformation needed for uplifting humanity again at both individual and collective levels. This book is being presented here in condensed form as follows [8]:

Let it be known that the beauty of character is the [intrinsic and innate] quality and characteristic of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) and is the most superior action of the spiritually perfected, saints, Gnostics and mystics (*Siddiqeen*). In reality, it is half of the religion. It is the fruit of the spiritual striving of the God-fearing and of the devout worshippers. Bad morals, manners and character are fatal poisons and in their lot is humiliation, despondency, and disrepute. They distance one from God and bring one closer to Satan. These are the entry points to hell.

Beautiful morals, manners, inner disposition, temperament, state of being, and character (*Ikhlaq al-Hasana*) are wide open doors to the Paradise and are means for Divine closeness and intimacy. Bad morals, manners, and character (*Ikhlaq al-Kabitha*) are diseases and sicknesses of the heart. Bodily diseases deprive one of the worldly life and diseases of the heart and soul cause the [eternal] life of the Hereafter to end. There is no apparent connection between the diseases of the body and diseases of the heart and soul but we see that physicians cure the bodily diseases and they have formulated innumerable rules and regulations and, in their light, diagnosis is carried out and medicines prescribed. When human being strives in connection with [curing the] diseases of this mortal body, one should also strive in connection with [curing the] diseases of the heart and soul. Such diseases also have a methodology [of diagnosis and cure and knowledge needed for that] which is necessary for every human being to learn because every heart has some diseases, if they are not cured then they become destructive and as a result of them, many other diseases are born out of them. Hence it is important to gain knowledge of these diseases, discover their causes and become familiarized with methods of their cure. In the following verse of Qur'an:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَن زَكَّىٰهَا

"Verily, one reached felicity and true success who purified it (i.e., the soul of all its diseases)." (Qur'an, Chapter 91, Verse 9)

What is meant is the curing of the heart:

وَقَدْ خَابَ مَن دَسَّىٰهَا

"And deprived and failed is the one who ruined the soul [with transgressions against Divine guidance, moral degradation, inner corruption, negativities and vileness]." (Qur'an, Chapter 91, Verse 10)

This verse is referring to negligence with curing the [diseases and ailments of the heart]. In this book, some diseases of the heart and states of their cure will be briefly explained. Every disease will be explained separately in remaining books of this [third] volume [of Ghazali's "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God" that deals exclusively with the destructive qualities of the soul]. The purpose here is acquisition of morals, manners and inner character excellences and shed light on ways of acquiring it. But first, the cure of bodily ailment will be mentioned as an example [or an analogy for curing spiritual ailments]. Interspersed with this discussion, the excellences of beautiful morals, manners and character will be explained along with its reality. Furthermore, it will be explained that through a determined [spiritual] striving, good morals, manners and character traits can be adopted (inculcated and attained). Methods and means of acquiring good character traits will be explained. Along with civilization and refinement of character and methods of spiritual strivings [to achieve that], those signs and indications will be mentioned through which the diseases of the heart are recognized.

Excellence of Good Noble Character and Harms of Bad Abominable Character

Verses and Prophetic Narrations: God praising His beloved Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him), expressed His bounties on him saying:

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ

"Verily, you are at a lofty plane of noble and sublime character." (Qur'an, Chapter 68, Verse 4)

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

هوان تصل من قطعك و تعطي من حرمك و تعفو عمن ظلمك

"Beauty of character is that you connect to those who disconnect relations with you

[from your relatives], you be kind, compassionate and giving to one who deprives you, and you forgive the one who oppresses you." (This tradition has been narrated in *Ibn Mardawiya* on the authority of [prophetic companions] Jabir, Anas and Qais bin Sa'ad bin 'Ubada [May God be pleased with them])

He also said:

انما بعثت لاتمم مكارم الاخلاق

"I have been [Divinely] ordained for the perfection and completion of good character, morals and manners." (This tradition has been narrated in *Musnad Ahmad*, *Hakim* and *Bayhaqi* on the authority of [prophetic companion] Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him])

اثقل مايوضع فى الميزان يوم القيامة تقوى الله و حسن الخلق

"The heaviest thing that will be placed on the scale of deeds (*Meezan*) on the Day of Judgment will be the fear of God and good character, morals, manners, inner dispositions and temperaments." (This tradition has been narrated in *Abu Daud* and *Tirmidhi* on the authority of [prophetic companion] Abu al-Darda [May God be pleased with him])

A man asked Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him): "O Messenger of God! What is the bad omen (i.e., deprivation from all that is good)?" He replied: "Bad character, morals and manners". (This tradition has been narrated in *Musnad Ahmad* on the authority of [Prophet's wife] Aisha [May God be pleased with her])

A man came to the Prophet and asked him for an advice. He replied:

اتق الله حيث كنت، قال: زدنى، قال اتبع السيئة الحسنة تمحها، قال: زدنى قال: خالق الناس بخلق حسن

"Have pious awe, reverence and fear God no matter where you live". He asked for more advice. Prophet replied: "If you happen to do something wrong or commit sin, follow it with doing something good and noble as good deeds erase sins". He asked for more advice. Prophet replied: "Treat people with good morals, manners and character".

He was asked: "O Messenger of God! What is the best of all action?" He replied: "Beautiful morals, manners and character".

Abu al-Darda (May God be pleased with him) said that he heard Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) say:

اول مایوضع فی المیزان حسن الخلق والسخاء ولما خلق اللّٰہ الایمان قال: اللّٰھم قونی فقواہ بحسن الخلق والسخاء ولما خلق اللّٰہ الکفر قال اللّٰھم قونی فقواہ بالبخل وسوء الخلق

"In the scale of deeds (*Meezan*) [on the Day of Judgment], beautiful morals, manners and character (*Husn ul-Khulq*) and generosity (*Sakha*) will be placed first. When God created faith [in Him], it asked: 'O God! Empower and strengthen me!' God strengthened it with beautiful morals, manners, and character (*Husn ul-Khulq*) and generosity (*Sakha*). When He created disbelief and rejection of God (*Kufr*), it asked: 'O God! Empower and strengthen me!' God gave it the power of miserliness (*Bukhul*) and bad abominable morals, manners and character (*Su ul-Khulq*)". (Hafiz Iraqi, a great scholar of *Hadith* or prophetic narrations, who researched and provided source references of *Hadiths* in this book Imam Ghazali's "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God", said that he was not able to find a source reference of this *Hadith*, however, *Hadith* collections *Abu Daud* and *Tirmidhi* have narrated a prophetic tradition from the same narrator (Abu al-Darda [May God be pleased with him]): "In the scale of deeds, nothing will be heavier than beautiful morals manners and character")

Prophet Muhammad (May the peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

ان اللّٰہ استخلص ھذا الدین لنفسہ ولا یصلح لدینکم الا السخاء وحسن الخلق الا فزینوا دینکم بھما

"God has purified this religion for Himself and for your religion (*Deen* or path to God) there is nothing more suitable than generosity and beautiful morals, manners and character. Beware! Beautify your religion with both of these two qualities". (This tradition has been narrated in *Dar Qatni* and *Khara-eti* on the authority of [Prophetic companion] Abu Sa'id al-Khudri [May God be pleased with him])

A prophetic narration states:

حسن الخلق خلق اللّٰہ الاعظم

"Beautiful morals, manners and character is the [Divine] quality of God, the Supreme". (This tradition has been narrated in *Tabarani Awsat* on the authority of [Prophetic companion] Ammar bin Yasir [May God be pleased with him])

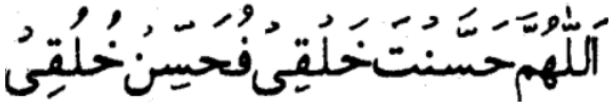
Prophet Muhammad (May the peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

انکم لن تسعوا الناس باموالکم فسعوھم ببسط الوجہ وحسن الخلق

"If you cannot have expansiveness with people through your wealth and properties (i.e., if you do not have financial means to help people with your generosity to fulfill their needs) then have expansiveness with them (be generous towards people) with a smiling face and beautiful morals, manners and character [towards them]". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Bazzar*, *Abu Ya'la* and *Tabarani* on the authority of [Prophetic companion] Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him])

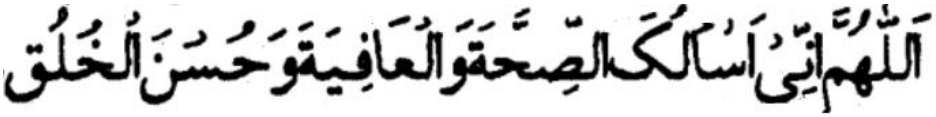
Bara bin 'Aazib (May God be pleased with him) said: "Prophet Muhammad (May the peace and blessings of God be upon him) was the most handsome and good looking and of the best morals, manners, character and demeanor towards people". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Khara-eti*)

Abu Mas'ud (May God be pleased with him) narrated that Prophet Muhammad (May the peace and blessings of God be upon him) used to make the following supplication:



"O God! You have made my outer appearance good, please make my inner character good as well (in other words, it's not enough to just have good looks as good looks combined with evil and vile inner being is of no use; what makes one truly beautiful is good looks along with beautiful morals, manners, character and inner disposition, i.e., a beautiful heart and soul)." (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Khara-eti*)

Abdullah bin Umar (May God be pleased with him) said that Prophet Muhammad (May the peace and blessings of God be upon him) used to make the following supplication abundantly and profusely:



"O God! I beseech You to grant me good health, peace and safety [from all harms in this world and the next], and beautiful morals, manners and character (as combination of these blessings is a perfection of Divinely bestowed blessings)". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Khara-eti*)

Usama bin Shareek (May God be pleased with him) said: "Once I visited Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) when some desert Arabs were asking him about the best thing that a servant [of God] has been bestowed with. He replied: 'Beautiful morals, manners, character and inner disposition (*Husn ul-Khulq*)'". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Ibn Majah*)

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

ان احبكم الي واقربكم مني مجلسا يوم القيامة احسنكم اخلاقا

"On the Day of Judgment, those people will be the most beloved and closest to me who have superior morals, manners, character and inner disposition."

Abdullah bin Abbas (May God be pleased with him) narrated from Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him):

ثلاث من لم تكن فيه او واحدة منهن فلا تعتدوا بشي من عمله' تقوى تحجزه عن معاصي الله او حلم يكف به السفيه او خلق يعيش به بين الناس

"A person who does not have these three things or any one of them then do not trust any of one's deeds: Pious, awe, reverence and fear of God (*Taqwa*) that prevents one from disobedience to God; patience, forbearing disposition, clemency and restraint (*Hilm*) that prevents one from [fighting with] a foolish person; and good morals, manners, character and inner disposition (*Khulq*) with whom one lives one's life among people". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Khara-eti* and *Tabarani Kabeer* on the authority of Umm Salama [May God be pleased with her])

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) further narrated the quality of beautiful morals, manners, character, and inner disposition as:

من سعادة المرء حسن الخلق

"Beautiful morals, manners, character and inner disposition (*Husn ul-Khulq*) is among the transformative agent [of change] for eternal happiness and endless success (*Sa'adah*) for an individual". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Khara-eti*)

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) once said:

ان المسلم المسدد ليدرك درجة الصائم القائم بحسن خلقه وكرم مزينه

"A Muslim whom God grants the ability to do good, achieves the rank of a worshipper who fasts and worships God all night through one's beautiful morals, manners and character and through one's kind inner disposition". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Musnad Ahmed* on the authority of Abdullah bin Amr [May God be pleased with him])

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) once said:

ان العبد ليبلغ خلقه عظيم درجات الاخرة و شرف المنازل واله لضعيف
فى العبادة

"A servant [of God, i.e., a human being] will achieve great [spiritual] ranks and degrees [before God] through good morals, manners, character and inner disposition even though one may be weak in [Divine] worship". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Khara-eti* and *Tabarani* on the authority of Anas bin Malik [May God be pleased with him])

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

سوء الخلق ذنب لا يغفر و سوء الظن خطيئة تضوح

"Bad morals, manners, character and vile inner disposition is an unforgiveable sin and having a bad opinion of others is such a sin that breeds other sins". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Tabarani Sagheer* on the authority of [Prophet's wife] Aisha [May God be pleased with her])

Junaid Baghdadi (May God have mercy upon him) said: "Despite paucity of knowledge and [righteous] actions, there are four qualities that take a human being to great spiritual degrees: First is forbearance, second is humility, third is generosity and fourth is beautiful morals, manners, characters and inner disposition. These four qualities are the perfection of faith". Kattani (May God have mercy upon him) said: "*Tasawwuf* (knowledge, practical methodology and state of spirituality) is the name of *Akhlaq* (beautiful morals, manners, character and inner disposition). One who is greater in *Akhlaq* is also greater in *Tasawwuf*". Umar (May God Be pleased with him) said: "Meet with people with beautiful morals, manners, character and inner disposition and stay away from them with your actions [to prevent causing any harm to them]". Yahya bin Mu'adh (May God have mercy upon him) said: "Bad morals, manners and character is such an evil in whose presence the abundance of good deeds is not beneficial. Good morals, manners and character is such a virtue in whose presence the abundance of shortcomings is not harmful". Abdullah bin Abbas (May God be pleased with him) was asked: "What is nobility (*Karam*)?" He replied: "Nobility is mentioned in Quran as:

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ

'Verily the nobler among you in the sight of God is the one who has pious awe, reverence and fear of God (*Taqwa*)'". (Qur'an, Chapter 49, Verse 13)

Abdullah bin Abbas (May God be pleased with him) said: "Every building has a foundation and Islam's foundation is beautiful morals, manners, character and inner disposition". Atta (May God have mercy upon him) said: "Whoever achieved [spiritual] heights, achieved through the means of beautiful morals, manners, character and inner

disposition. No one other than Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) achieved perfection in beautiful morals, manners, character, and inner disposition. Those people are closer to God who follow the footsteps of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) in [nurturing] beautiful morals, manners, character and inner disposition (*Husn ul-Khulq*)".

Reality of Good Noble Character and of Bad Abominable Character

Reality of Beautiful Morals, Manners, Character, and Inner Disposition: There are two [relevant] words - *Khalq* (good outer appearance) and *Khulq* (good inner character and disposition). Both of these words are used together as well. For example, it is said that such and such person is both good looking and good charactered. In order words, one's looks are good and one's morals, manners, demeanor, character, and inner disposition are good as well. This person possesses outer beauty as well as inner beauty. In a statement like that, *Khalq* means outer appearance and *Khulq* means inner appearance and this is so because human being is a combination of body and soul. Body can be observed with eye and soul is perceived with insight (*Baseerah*) or inner eye. Body and soul both have a condition and appearance. This appearance can both be pleasing and ugly. Soul, which is perceived by means of insight (*Baseerah*) or inner eye, is superior and higher than the body perceived by the eye. Therefore, God attributing soul to Himself, expressed its greatness as follows:

إِنِّي خَٰلِقُۢ بَشَرًا مِّن صَلْصَٰلٍ مِّنْ حَمَإٍ مَّسْنُونٍ ﴿٢٨﴾

فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُۥ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِن رُّوحِى فَقَعُوا۟ لَهُۥ سَٰجِدِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

"I am about to create human being from a sounding clay. So, when I am done creating it and have put in it (i.e., the outer form of human being which is the body) a soul from Me, you all [O Angels] fell down in prostration before that [as per My Command] (to submit to My Will and to the Divine Purpose of creating human being and to submit to the loftiness of one's soul, due to the Divine secret and potential for reaching the pinnacle of spiritual achievement, in the form of Divine Gnosis intrinsically inherent in it)." (Qur'an, Chapter 15, Verses 28-29)

In this verse, body is attributed to clay and soul is attributed to God. Here soul (*Ruh*) and self (*Nafs*) refer to the same thing and if the word self is used instead of soul, then there should be no confusion. Now let's listen to the explanation of *Khulq* (inner character and disposition). *Khulq* is the name of such an inherent intrinsic state of the self through which deeds are easily performed. If deeds born out of this condition [of self] are good according to the Divine Law (*Shariah*) and intellect then it will be termed

as beautiful morals, manners, character and inner disposition and if deeds are bad then it will be termed bad morals, manners, character and inner disposition.

In this definition, the condition of inherent intrinsic state of the self so that deeds are performed easily and effortlessly, was set because to make an effort to spend [in charitable acts and to help people in needs], control anger through force and struggle, etc., is not forbearance because *Khulq* (inner character and disposition) is something that expresses itself through deeds (either good or bad) without any effort.

Here there are four matters: Firstly, whether a deed is good or bad; secondly, whether one is capable of doing either good or bad deed; thirdly, knowing the reality of them (i.e., deeds whether they are good or bad); fourthly, the presence of an inherent intrinsic state within self that gets inclined towards either beauty or ugliness and either one of them becomes easy for it. *Khulq* (inner character and disposition) is related to the fourth meaning - in other words, it is the inherent intrinsic state [deeply ingrained within self] through which human being is actively engaged in [either a negative or positive activity like] miserliness or generosity.

Four Components of Inner Beauty: Just like outer beauty is not the name of merely [having] beautiful eyes but instead, the balance and proportion of all organs - eyes, nose, ears, lips, cheeks, etc. - is called beauty and through the beauty of all of these, the completion [and perfection] of beauty comes about. Likewise, inner beauty also has four components and it is necessary to have beauty in all four components [in order to possess inner beauty]. If all these [four] components remain balanced and proportionate, human being will be called complete in terms of inner beauty. These four components are the power of knowledge, the power of anger, the power of desire and the power of justice, i.e., the power to keep the first three powers in a state of balance and moderation.

The excellence and beauty of the power of knowledge is that by means of it, a human being becomes capable of distinguishing between falsehood and truth in statements, truth and falsehood in beliefs, and beauty and ugliness in actions. When this power reaches such a level, its fruits will be granted in the form of wisdom (*Hikmah*). The reality of beautiful morals, manners, character, and inner disposition (*Ikhlaq*) is wisdom about which God says:

وَمَن يُؤْتَ ٱلْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا ۗ

"And the one who has been granted wisdom has received [a source of] immense good." (Qur'an, Chapter 2, Verse 269)

The excellence of powers of anger and desire is that, these two act upon the direction of wisdom, i.e., intellect and Divine law. The objective of the power of balance and justice is to make the powers of anger and desire subservient and subjugated to wisdom. Intellect is like an advisor and kind helper and the power of balance and justice is the implementer of advice from the intellect. Anger is the power that has the ability to accept the direction of intellect. Its similitude is like that of a hunting dog that needs

training and after that it becomes such that without a hint from the hunter, it neither proceeds forward nor retreats backward. Desire is like a horse which is mounted to set forth on hunting. Horse is sometimes trained and civilized and sometimes wild and rebellious. Through the power of balance and justice, desire is kept in control otherwise instead of hunting [the eternal happiness and everlasting success], human being oneself becomes hunted.

One who possesses these four components [of inner beauty] at the level of [balanced] moderation will be a person of beautiful morals, manners, character, and inner disposition. A person who has some components [of inner beauty] in moderation and some imbalanced and immoderate (i.e., on extremes as one may have either too little or too much of these components) then one will be termed good charactered with respect to the moderate ones. Its example is like that of a person who has beautiful eyes on the face, but other things are not good. In this case, one is termed beautiful with respect to eyes and ugly with respect to other organs. The beauty and balanced moderation of the power of anger is called bravery; balanced moderation and beauty of the power of desire is called innocence (*'Iffa*). If power of anger is more than the level of balanced moderation, it will be called excessive rage (*Tahoor*); if it's below the level of balanced moderation it will termed as cowardice. Similarly, the power of desire above the level of balanced moderation is called “inciter of evil” (*Shar*) and below the level of balanced moderation is called stagnation (*Jamood*). The level of balanced moderation needed in between the two [extremes] are bravery and innocence. What’s on the two ends of the spectrum or extremes, in other words, the paucity or excess is not the objective, instead, they (extremes) have been condemned and instead of being termed excellences (*Fada-il*), they are termed as deformities (*Radha-il*). The power of justice (*'Adl*) does not have any paucity or excess [as it is at the level of balanced moderation] and its opposite is oppression. When justice is not there, oppression exits. The level of balanced moderation of knowledge is called wisdom (*Hikmah*) and to use it for wrong objectives is to take it out of the level of balanced moderation. If its usage is towards excess [in wrong ways], it’s called evil and deception and if its usage is towards paucity then it’s called stupidity. The middle level [of balanced moderation] of knowledge [that avoids all extremes] is called wisdom. These details reveal that the basic principles and components of good character (*Ikhlaq*) are four: wisdom, bravery, innocence, and justice.

Wisdom refers to the state of the self (*Nafs*) in which one can distinguish the right from the wrong is all matters that are within one’s capacity. Justice refers to the state of the self (*Nafs*) by means of which one rules over the anger and desire and makes them subjugated to wisdom. Bravery refers to the state in which the power of anger is subservient and obedient to the power of intellect and does not act or refrain from acting without their permission. Innocence refers to the power by means of which, desire and lust can be made disciplined and subservient to intellect and the Divine Law. The origin and fountainhead of all good qualities and character traits are these four principles. For example, following praiseworthy inner qualities are born out of the balanced moderation of power of intellect: wise decision making by thinking through matters, sharpness of the mind, wise perspective on matters, awareness of the hidden harms of the lower self and

of subtleties of matters and actions. The excess of this power [of intellect] engenders inner negative disposition towards wrongs, devising [to harm others], deception and cunningness. Paucity [of the power of intellect] engenders diseases like lack of experience (expertise and know-how), foolishness, stupidity, lack of awareness [about realities of matters] and obsessions (obsessional behaviors). Lack of experience refers to not having experience despite the soundness of imagination thought process as some individuals are experienced in one matter but totally inexperienced in another. Difference between foolishness and obsession is that the purpose of foolish person is right but does not know the way of achieving the objective. Obsession is to adopt a thing that is not worthy of adopting as it is completely detrimental to one and others. The balanced moderation of bravery fosters these beautiful inner qualities: nobility, audacity, keeping a strict watch on oneself, forbearance, perseverance, restraining anger, dignity, sobriety, etc. Lack of power of bravery engenders insult, humiliation, fear, cheapness, inferiority complex, lack of courage and low morale. The balanced moderation of innocence fosters [the beautiful inner qualities and excellences of] generosity, modesty and shyness, patience, overlooking others' faults, contentment, God-fear, subtlety, high courage and morale, broad heartedness and magnanimity and lack of greed. To exceed the bounds of balanced moderation of innocence engenders inner diseases and negative destructive qualities like greed, avarice, shamelessness, inner disposition towards evil, being wasteful and spendthrift, ostentation, insulting others, blabbing, flattery, jealousy, disgracing and debasing poor and humble.

Upshot of this is that there are four principles of beautiful character, qualities, and inner disposition: wisdom, bravery, innocence, and justice. All other morals, manners, inner character traits and qualities are branches of these four principal qualities. In these four principles [of excellence of morals, manners, inner character traits and qualities], the perfection of balanced moderation was not granted to anyone other than to Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him). People who came after him are not close to him in this excellence and perfection. To the extent a person resembles and emulates the Prophet in these qualities, one will be close to God to that extent and the one who is distant from the Prophet in these qualities, will be distant from God to that extent. A person who is an embodiment of all of these beautiful morals, manners, inner character traits and qualities deserves to be obeyed, referred to and followed by others in all of one's actions. The person devoid of them and instead is an embodiment of their opposites, deserves to be exiled from the town and boycotted by people because such a person does not have humanity left in one but instead, has become a representative of Satan. Just like distance is kept from Satan [by desisting from evil and wrong], likewise such a person should also be distanced. Just like a person who is an embodiment of excellence of morals, manners, inner character traits and qualities and possesses proximity to angelic qualities is worthy of leadership and emulation, similarly, a person due to one's association with satanic qualities deserves to be cast away from Divine mercy and be avoided. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) has been sent for the completion and perfection of *Ikhlaq* (beautiful morals, manners, inner character traits, disposition, and qualities). These qualities are the ones that Qur'an mentioned as part of qualities of the believers:

إِنَّمَا ٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ بِٱللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِۦ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَابُوا۟ وَجَٰهَدُوا۟
بِأَمْوَٰلِهِمْ وَأَنفُسِهِمْ فِى سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ ۚ أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلصَّٰدِقُونَ

“Complete believers are the ones who believed in God and His Prophet then never doubted [the Divine guidance] and strived in the path of God [with a sincere striving to reach the proximity of God] with their [material] possessions and with their selves. These are the truthful ones (*Sadiqoon,* i.e., those worthy of God's Gnosis, friendship and intimacy).” (Qur’an, Chapter 49, Verse 15)

To believe in God and His Messenger without any doubt and hesitation is an act of the power of certitude and the power of certitude is a fruit of intellect and perfection of wisdom. Striving with material possessions is generosity and this striving can happen when desire and lust are controlled. Striving with one's self is bravery and this striving is done with conditions of the intellect and using the power of anger within the limits of balanced moderation.

Change in Character and Inner Qualities by Means of Spiritual Striving and Struggle

Those who have misguidance of [incorrect] beliefs, consider striving (spiritual striving to achieve inner spiritual transformation to become better persons by ridding the heart and soul of all negative and detrimental propensities and qualities) burdensome and difficult [or even impossible]. They are unwilling to busy themselves with the purification and transformation of their inner selves and building their character and making it civilized. They do not consider the shortcomings and harm-inflicting tendencies of their character, are due to their own personal failings, deficiencies, and negative propensities. Instead, they maintain that character, morals and manners stay as they are, and no transformation is possible in them because one’s inner nature cannot be changed. They have presented two arguments in favor of their claim. Firstly, *Khulq* is the name of one’s inner form and appearance and *Khalq* is the name of one’s outer form and appearance. There is no change possible in one’s outer appearance and form. For example, a short person cannot increase height to become tall nor can a tall person become short. Ugly person cannot become beautiful and beautiful cannot become ugly. Inner form and appearance should be construed as the outer one. Second argument they have is that beautiful character intends to eliminate lust and anger but we have found through experience and trials that lust and anger are part of the innate human nature, and they never end and to go after them is futile effort and to waste one’s life in useless endeavors, as the purpose of purification of the self is that the heart does not remain inclined towards fleeting pleasures and that is impossible. In what follows, an answer will be provided for both of these arguments.

Answer to the First Argument: It is that if change and transformation in character had not been possible then there would not have been any need for any preaching, advice,

training and education nor would Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) had said:

"Make your morals, manners, character and qualities good". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Abu Bakr bin Lal fi Makarim al-Ikhlaq* on the authority of Mu'adh [May God be pleased with him])

Change and transformation of morals, manners, character, inner disposition, and qualities is not exclusively reserved for human being, instead even animals' qualities change. Look at hawk that though it's wild, it becomes accustomed to humans. A hunting dog after training becomes capable of running after a prey on the command of his master and to catch it and present it to its master without eating it. Similarly, a wild horse becomes obedient after training. Are all of these not examples of transformation of character? The reality of the matter in relation to this is that there are two kinds of existences: perfected and deficient. Perfected existences are those that are complete in terms of their existence - there is no decrease or increase in them as human being does not have the power to cause a decrease or increase in them. For example, sky, stars, outer and inner parts of the body, animals and their [inner and outer] parts, etc. Deficient existences are the ones whose existence is not complete yet. They can reach completion provided they have the conditions of reaching perfection. For example, date seed is neither a fruit nor a tree but its composition is such that if it's planted and is served by watering it then this seed can become a tree because it has the potential to become a tree. But if someone wants to directly convert this seed into a fruit then that's not possible because it does not have the potential to become a fruit. When the state of a seed is such that it is impacted by human being's prerogative and transforms from one state to another then how can the powers of anger and desire not get transformed? However, to completely eradicate these powers is not within our control. By the means of spiritual rigors and exercises and spiritual strivings we can bring these powers in our control but we cannot end them. We have been [Divinely] commanded to do just that and this is the very means of our salvation in the life after and in reaching God (*Wusul il-Allah*, i.e., Gnosis and Divine intimacy). However, [human] temperaments are variegated or different - some temperaments accept change and transform quickly and some accept it late. There are two reasons for the differences in temperaments: first is that the trait whose transformation is desired, is firmly ingrained in the temperament due to existing for as long as one has been alive. Transformation of the traits of lust, anger and arrogance is all possible but the most difficult to transform is the trait of lust and desire as it is with one since birth. That's why even little kids are not devoid of it. Anger is usually born after seven year of age and only after that, the power of discernment is born. Second is that a particular character trait has become second nature due to abundantly acting upon it and on its implications and continuously deeming it good.

Four Degrees of Human Beings: There are four degrees of human beings in connection with this. First degree is that one lives in the same condition in which one is born and does not discern between truth and falsehood, good and bad, and in terms of one's true nature, is devoid of all types of beliefs. Such person's cure is easy, and one can become healthy [in spiritual sense] in a short time. Such a patient is in need of a

spiritual guide (*Murshid*) and an inner catalyst and drive so that such a catalyst drives one towards spiritual striving. Morals, manners, inner disposition, and character of such a person can quickly become good. Second degree is that one thinks of evil as evil but is not in the habit of doing good righteous deeds. Instead, Satan has kept one entangled in bad deeds and such a person is subservient to one's own desires and lusts but is aware of one's shortcomings despite one's deviation from the path of truth. Transformation of such a person is harder than [the person who is in] the first degree because there will be two stages of reformation: Firstly, one's bad habits need to be broken; secondly, one needs to be made accustomed to good deeds. One's reformation is possible on the condition that such a person is actively ready for spiritual rigors and striving. Third degree is that one thinks good of bad morals and character traits, and bad and evil actions are necessary [part of life] for one and one has been raised with such morals and actions. Curing such a person is impossible and [inner spiritual] transformation of such a person cannot be expected because if there is one reason of misguidance then it can be removed, instead, here there is a plethora of reasons [of misguidance] and it's baffling to see which reasons can be removed. Fourth degree is that one is involved in an evil oneself and [on top of that] wishes to see others doing just like one and feels proud of destroying others [morally and spiritually that eventually leads to complete destruction in every sense]. Such a person is at a very difficult level and one's misguidance is in layers upon layers. Reformation of such a person is impossible and unthinkable.

In these four degrees or categories, first person is just ignorant, second one is ignorant and misguided, third one is ignorant, misguided and prone to evil (*Fasiq*), fourth one is ignorant, misguided, prone to evil and inviter towards harms and tribulations.

Answer to the Second Argument: Antagonists maintain that the objective of spiritual exercises is to eradicate the power of desire and anger, even though it is impossible. We maintain that eradication of these powers is not the objective, instead the creation of the power of desire is [something] advantageous and its presence in human beings is necessary. Therefore, if one does not have the desire to eat then one will perish. If desire to copulate does not remain then human race will come to an end. If anger ceases to exist, then one will not be able to defend oneself against harmful things and will perish. The objective is not to eradicate these powers but only to protect them from excess and paucity and to bring them to the level of balanced moderation. For example, the objective of anger is that neither there remain an excessive amount of anger leading to recklessness nor there should be any cowardice but instead, the power of anger becomes subservient to the intellect and the Divine law. God says:

وَٱلْكَٰظِمِينَ ٱلْغَيْظَ وَٱلْعَافِينَ عَنِ ٱلنَّاسِ ۗ

"And they are the ones who restrain their anger and forgive people." (Qur'an, Chapter 3, Verse 134)

In this verse, those people have been praised who restrain their anger. It does not refer to people who do not even get angry to begin with. This shows that eradication of anger and desire is an unnatural matter, and this is not the purpose of the Divine Law. The

purpose of the Divine law is to bring the two powers [of anger and desire] to such a level of balanced moderation that intellect starts to subjugate and dominate them and not to a level where they dominate the intellect. This is the purpose of transformation of inner character traits and dispositions. Sometimes lust [or desire] attacks a human being with such intensity that intellect is not capable of repelling it. However, with spiritual strivings, it is possible to bring it to balanced moderation. Test and experience prove it and there is no doubt left in it. The proof from Quran that in the matter of morals, manners and inner character traits, balanced moderation is required and not the extremes of excess or paucity, is the following verse:

وَٱلَّذِينَ إِذَآ أَنفَقُواْ لَمۡ يُسۡرِفُواْ وَلَمۡ يَقۡتُرُواْ وَكَانَ بَيۡنَ ذَٰلِكَ قَوَامٗا

"And when they spend, they are neither spendthrift nor stingy but [rather] their spending is in between the two extremes (i.e., at a moderate level)." (Qur'an, Chapter 25, Verse 67)

This verse refers to generosity which is a level in between the [extreme] levels of reckless spending and stinginess [that are at the opposite ends of the spectrum]. Furthermore, God says:

وَلَا تَجۡعَلۡ يَدَكَ مَغۡلُولَةً إِلَىٰ عُنُقِكَ وَلَا تَبۡسُطۡهَا كُلَّ ٱلۡبَسۡطِ

"Do not tie your hands to your neck nor leave them completely opened (i.e., don't be either a miser or a spendthrift but stay in the middle of the two extremes)." (Qur'an, Chapter 17, Verse 29)

Emphasis has been placed on moderation in desire to eat as well. God says:

وَكُلُواْ وَٱشۡرَبُواْ وَلَا تُسۡرِفُوٓاْۚ إِنَّهُۥ لَا يُحِبُّ ٱلۡمُسۡرِفِينَ

"Eat and drink and do not exceed the bounds and limits [of moderation]. Verily, God does not like the folks who exceed the bounds [of moderation and go to extremes]." (Qur'an, Chapter 7, Verse 31)

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

"Best matters are in the middle [in the form of balanced moderation avoiding all forms of extremes and extremisms]". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Baihaqi* on the authority of Mutraf bin Abdullah [May God be pleased with him])

There is a [Divine] secret behind the praiseworthiness, preference and seeking of matters at the level of balanced moderation. The investigation of this secret is that the eternal happiness and endless success (*Sa'adah*) of the Hereafter depends on purification of the heart from all attachments and impurities of worldliness as God says:

إِلَّا مَنۡ أَتَى ٱللَّهَ بِقَلۡبٖ سَلِيمٖ

"[Salvation, eternal happiness and success will be] for the one who brings to God a

sound heart (i.e., a heart purified from all filths including the attachments and impurities of worldliness)." (Qur'an, Chapter 26, Verse 89)

Miserliness and reckless spending both belong to impurities and attachments to worldliness. Heart should be devoid of both of these extremities. In other words, the heart should not be inclined towards accumulating material possessions [with a materialistic mindset] nor it should be inclined towards spending it all, because the one with the greed to spend will have one's heart's focus and attachment towards it, like where it (material goods, possessions and money) will come from and where one will spend. On the other hand, a miser's heart will be exclusively focused on hoarding. The safety of the heart is to be devoid of both [extremes] because eradicating them is not possible, that's why, a state was determined where both of these [extremes] were not there and that is the state of balance and moderation. In that state, both of these [negative] qualities are not there. That's why, when heat leaves hot water and it is not cold either, it is termed "lukewarm". This generosity is the moderation of excessive spending and miserliness. Bravery is the quality of moderation in between excessive aggression (violence) and unmanliness (cowardliness). Innocence is the point of moderation between greed (lust) and stagnation. All other inner qualities and character traits should be deduced from this [explanation].

In every character trait and [human] quality, excess and paucity are both condemned, and objective is the balanced moderation. Teacher and spiritual guide should bring out the harms of anger and miserliness in front of their students and should not allow any exceptions because if they allow even a small amount of these [destructive] qualities, they will find an excuse for more. However, if they don't allow even a small amount then it's possible that they may settle on less and will not be inclined for more and that's how they will achieve the level of balanced moderation. Permission for less will become excuse for more. That's why, it has been said to students and seekers of the spiritual path to not even allow these two powers to remain, instead they should eradicate them. This secret should not have been written here because people with low intellectual capacity get deceived by it and they think that anger is their right and miserliness is also their right. [Similarly, the need for balance and moderation in other human qualities and inner character traits can be deduced from this discussion as it is a wide-ranging discussion encompassing all human inner character traits and qualities]

Means and Source of Beautiful Inner Character, Disposition and Qualities (*Husn ul-Khulq*) is Moderation Shunning all Extremes

You have understood this very well by now that the crux of beautiful inner character traits and qualities is that the power of intellect should be moderate, wisdom (the moderate level of intellect) should be perfected, powers of desire and anger, besides being at the level of moderation, should be subservient and obedient to the Divine law and intellect. This [level of] moderation is acquired due to two reasons. First reason [or means] is the Grace and Mercy of God on the individual and [realization that] one is from the day of one's birth, good-charactered and has perfected intellect. Lust and anger are not dominant over one, instead they are both subservient to intellect and the

Divine law. Such a person does not need outer education to become a scholar and teachings of outer mannerism to become a civilized and well-mannered person. Instead, such a one is a natural scholar and a well-mannered person like Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him), John (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) and the last of all the prophets, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) were. It is not a far-fetched matter that one has in one's nature and temperament the [noble inner] qualities that are acquired from learning and effort. Some children are truthful, audacious, and giving from the very beginning. Some children are liars, cowards, deceptive and miser from the very beginning. However, these traits are born in them at times by keeping company of the people who have them and at times by learning [from others using various means of learning including emulating what they see in others around them]. Second reason [or means] is that one acquires beautiful inner character traits, dispositions, and qualities by means of spiritual rigors, strivings, and exercises. In other words, by exacting the work from the lower self so that the desired inner character trait or quality is achieved. For example, a person desiring to be generous should follow the people of generosity and spend wealth as they do, even though one would need to be patient with the lower self (*Nafs*) [as it is not open for change for the better]. This [striving] should continue until the lower self acquires it as a habit and until generosity becomes part of one's temperament and inner disposition.

Similarly, one who is dominated by [the quality of] arrogance and wants to become humble, should follow the actions of the people of humility and should continue with the striving and spiritual struggle and try to incline the lower self towards humility until this inner character trait becomes a habit and until humility becomes easy for the lower self. It is the same method for acquiring all good and praiseworthy inner character qualities and traits. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

جعلت قرة عيني في الصلاة

"The coolness of my eyes is in prayers". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Nasa'i* on the authority of Anas [May God be pleased with him])

The Prophet felt the coolness of his eyes in prayers because this righteous deed became his habit and second nature. Until the lower self feels hardship in worship and difficulty in abandoning prohibitions, the harm will remain, and perfection of eternal bliss will not be achieved. However, perseverance in good righteous deeds with feelings of hardship and pain is better than lack of perseverance in them, however, it is not better than doing them with desire and inner inclination. God says:

وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى ٱلْخَٰشِعِينَ

"Verily prayers are difficult except for them who have humility in their hearts." (Qur'an, Chapter 2, Verse 45)

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

اعبدالله في الرضاء فان لم تستطع ففي الصبر على ما تكره خيرا كثيرا

"Worship God in a state of *Rida* (rejoicing in God's Will such that you are pleased with whatever He chooses for you whether it seems good or bad). If it's not possible [for you due to the loftiness of this spiritual state] then being patient with whatever you dislike, has immense good in it [as it's a reservoir of spiritual treasuries]". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Tabarani Kabeer*)

It's not a perfection of *Sa'adah* (one's good fortune that forebodes eternal happiness and endless triumph) that sometimes a [righteous] deed is done with *Rida* (complete acceptance of the Divine decree and rejoicing over it) and inner inclination and one finds pleasure in doing it and sometimes it's the opposite. Instead, every moment and at every turn one should be in the same state. Rather as one progresses in age, the desire and fondness, inner inclination, Divine love and longing and acceptance of the Divine decree should increase.

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) when asked about *Sa'adah* (one's good fortune that forebodes eternal happiness and endless triumph) said:

طول العمر في طاعة الله

"[It is] Having a long life in obedience and worship of God". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Abu Mansur ad-Daylami* on the authority of Abdullah bin Umar [May God be pleased with him])

That's the reason why Prophets (Peace and blessings of God be upon them all) and saints used to dislike death because according to a Prophetic narration: "World is a cultivation (farming land) of the Hereafter". As much as one has life, to that extent will be the amount of Divine worship and to that extent the recompense and reward from God will be. Self will transform from clean to purified, inner character traits and qualities will progress from strong to stronger and from good to excellent. Other than that, the purpose of worship is to have effect on the heart [as Divine worship is not for the sake of worship alone but for the sake of nurturing the heart and soul to enable and empower them to reach the doorstep of the Divine Reality] and that happens when there is unceasing perseverance and persistence in worship.

The purpose of these beautiful morals, manners, inner character traits and dispositions is that the love of worldliness does not remain in the heart, love of God gets firmly ingrained in the heart, nothing remains beloved to one than the [homecoming and] meeting with God, one spends material possessions in ways by means of which one can reach God. Anger and desire both have been put to human disposal [in a state of subservience] to be used in accordance with the ways outlined by the Divine law and also to make them means of reaching God in the state of Gnosis and Divine intimacy. After that, one should be happy with such deeds and find them pleasurable. If someone finds comfort in prayers or finds coolness of eyes therein or Divine worships seems good, then this is nothing surprising as [good] habits in the self can become the reason

for the appearance of even more wondrous and strange things. We find kings and prosperous people always beset with sadness and pain. On the other hand, look at the indigent gambler who is still happy after losing and finds pleasure in it and without it, life would become very difficult. Gambling causes loss of wealth, home and family gets destroyed, comforts of life get snatched away and fear of accountability to law enforcement hangs like a sword on top of them. Even then they cannot get rid of this addiction because after playing (gambling) for a while, one becomes accustomed to it and is unable to leave it even after trying. One who flies pigeons is so enamored by this sport that one stands in sun all day and does not feel the harshness of the sun rays because of one's love for the pigeons and interest in seeing them fly in open space and betting on them is one's favorite pastime. Same is the state of bad natured people who get punished day and night with horrific punishments and face hardships of incarceration but still do not desist from their wrong actions and deem their pastimes [that are criminal in nature] as worthy of pride and happily face all punishments. Such is their extent [of passion and madness for their criminal activities] that even if the thieves are killed, they would not reveal where they hid stolen goods and identify their partners [in crime]. The reason is that they think of their work as excellence and perfection [of human endeavors] and excessive violence as bravery, and have become so accustomed to these activities that they do not refrain from facing [arrest, trials and] punishments. These punishments are source of comfort for them. Every person is busy and preoccupied with one's state and proud of one's endeavors and professions whether they are rulers and leaders, or janitors and barbers. All these matters come to fore as a result of persistence and perseverance in the same work and when the same matter is observed in people of similar temperament and persuasion, these matters become even more firmly ingrained.

In any case when human self can find pleasure in falsehood [and wrong] and can be inclined towards evil then why can it not find pleasure in truth and why can it not be inclined towards goodness and righteousness? Reality is that the innate [human] nature is not inclined towards bad things and inner destructive qualities. It is like a person who has the desire and inclination to eat soil. Can this inclination be termed a natural inclination? One's inclination towards wisdom, love of God, Divine Gnosis and worship is like one's inclination towards eating and drinking [which is a pure natural phenomenon]. Just like the inclination towards eating food is part of innate [human] nature, similarly inclination towards love of God, Gnosis and worship is a necessary outcome of the innate nature of the heart. This is because the heart [or soul] is a Divine command, its inclination towards the implications of desire and lust can be temporary but cannot be perpetual and innately natural. The real nourishment of the heart [or soul] is wisdom, Divine Gnosis and Divine love. If due to impediments, it becomes deviated from the implications of its true innate nature then it's like the one who has developed a problem with the stomach and does not have the desire left for food even though stomach's nourishment is through food and human life depends on it. It is evident from this example, that to the extent a heart is inclined towards [things and matters] other than God, to that extent it (the heart or soul) will be diseased. However, if love of other than God is for the sake of God then there is nothing wrong with that, instead, such a love will also be a part of the true innate [human] nature.

This explanation proves beyond any shadow of doubt that by means of spiritual strivings and struggle, beautiful morals, manners, inner character traits and dispositions can be [explicitly] acquired. In other words, if one acquires them with struggle and effort and keeps adhering to them then in the end, these inner qualities and character traits become innate and second nature. This is a strange connection between the heart and bodily limbs since whatever qualities are born in the heart, they necessarily impact the limbs and they start to move upon receiving signals from the heart. Similarly, actions performed by limbs influence the heart. This chain of [mutual] influence of heart and limbs continues. It will help to understand this reality through an example. Suppose someone wants to gain expertise in the art of calligraphy. The way to acquire it is to emulate the example of expert calligraphers and write the letters and words as they do. One should continue with this exercise for a long time until calligraphy becomes a habit and just as beautiful letters were previously formed with great effort, they now begin to be formed with ease. Similarly, if someone wants to become a scholastic theologian (*Faqeeh*), one should follow the scholastic theologians. In other words, one should continuously repeat and rehearse the issues (matters or points of knowledge) related to scholastic theology (*Fiqh*) so that one memorizes them so that their influence reaches the heart and one truly becomes a scholastic theologian who follows what one has learnt. Similarly, one desirous of being generous, God-fearing, tolerant, forbearing, and humble should follow [in the footsteps of] those people who are truly endowed with the ornaments of generosity, God-fear, tolerance, forbearance, and humility. This following is initially done with great efforts, but later on these actions that are being followed, become habit and get [firmly] rooted in one's temperament and inner disposition. This is the very strategy for acquiring beautiful morals, manners, inner character qualities, traits, and dispositions.

It should be remembered here that just as a student of scholastic theology does not fail in one's objective due to taking a day off, similarly one does not become a scholastic theologian by studying and repeating [to memorize points of knowledge of scholastic theology] for a day. Similarly, a seeker of purification, perfection, and beautification of the heart through righteous deeds, cannot achieve one's purpose by making efforts for a day nor does a day of sin becomes an impediment for this objective. Scholars' statement that one major sin is not a cause of eternal loss means the same thing [as the door of Divine forgiveness through one's remorse, repentance and making amends is always open]. However, a day's break can be a reason for another day's break and if it continues, it can lead to laziness in one's temperament and the lower self can become accustomed to inaction. May God protect us from that [as the consequences of laziness leading to inaction in the matter of improving our spiritual condition leads to an eternal loss, deprivation, and sorrow]. Such is the state of the people who do not give much importance to the minor sins and think of them as small and deceive their lower self with [future] repentance and this goes on to such an extent that they do not get an opportunity to repent and the iron grip of death gets hold of them. Their hearts have been darkened [by then] due to their insistence on sins and they are no longer able to repent [to make amends]. Ali (May God be pleased with him - a companion of Prophet Muhammad [Peace and blessings of God be upon him]) said: "The beginning of faith in

the heart starts with a white dot [a particle of Divine light]. As the faith increases, the illumination and size of this dot also increases until the whole heart becomes illumined [with effulgence of Divine light]. Hypocrisy starts with a dark dot [dark spot on the heart]. As hypocrisy increases, the darkness of this particle and its presence in one's perceivable existence also increases until the whole heart [and soul] is darkened".

It is proven from this detailed explanation that beautiful manners, morals, inner character traits and dispositions (*Ikhlaq*) are sometimes innate [in one's nature] and are naturally found in human self [as a Divine endowment and largesse on that individual] and sometimes they need to be acquired through efforts. This acquisition is initially done with effort and pain but later the same beautiful manners, morals, inner character traits and dispositions become habit and part of one's temperament. These are also acquired by observing good people and following in their footsteps because temperaments are good at copying and all matters (temperaments) whether good or bad are absorbed by them. An individual who has [good character a part of one's] temperament, habit, and education, all three of them, is at a very high level of excellence. And an individual is at the extreme degree of humiliation and remoteness from God whose temperament is defective, likes evil because of one's inner disposition and propensity towards it and also has bad friends and companions. All other people are in [spiritual] degrees in between these two degrees [at the opposite ends of the spectrum]. Qur'an says:

فَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُۥ ﴿٧﴾
وَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُۥ ﴿٨﴾

"One who does an atom's weight worth of good shall see it [in the Hereafter] and one who does an atom's weight worth of evil shall [also] see it." (Qur'an, Chapter 99, Verses 7-8)

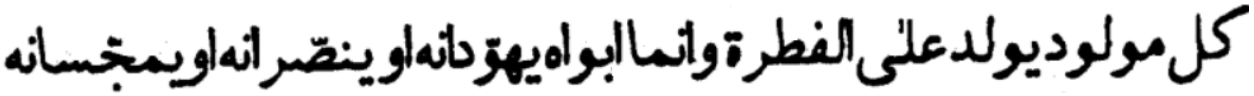
وَمَا ظَلَمَهُمُ ٱللَّهُ وَلَٰكِن كَانُوٓا۟ أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ

"And God did not oppress them [to the slightest extent] but they oppressed themselves [through their unrighteous, evil and wrong actions they did in their worldly lives]." (Qur'an, Chapter 16, Verse 33)

Detailed Exposition of the Way of Acquiring Civilization of Morals, Manners, Inner Character and Disposition

Body and Self: You have learnt this before that moderation in inner character traits is an indication of health and deviation from moderation is an indication of disease. It is similar to the moderation and balance in body's temperament being a sign of health and deviation from it a sign of illness. In relation to the subject matter being discussed, we can use the example of body. Just like efforts are made to remove bodily illnesses in order to bring the state of health and physical wellbeing, likewise inner destructive characteristics (character traits, inner qualities and dispositions detrimental to one's

spiritual, psychological, emotional and intellectual wellbeing) are removed from the self (*Nafs*) and it is embellished with beautiful morals, manners, inner character traits and dispositions. In the physical human bodily system, the real objective is balance and moderation. The defects in food and desires related to it can cause a defect in stomach. Similarly, the real objective in human inner self is also balance and moderation. This balance and moderation of the inner self is alluded to in a famous tradition (*Hadith*) of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) that every child is born with a moderate temperament and true innate nature [that is inclined to all that is good] but later on the parents mold him or her in their own mold. The words of the Hadith are as follows:



"Every child is born on true innate nature [on which God has created the entire humankind such that one is born being already predisposed to faith in God, dedication to truth and righteousness, everything that is good and positive, peace and harmony with everyone, and a yearning to reach one's heavenly origin through a state of Gnosis leading to inner illumination and dawning of eternal truths] but one's parents convert one into Jewish, Christian and Magian (alluding to variegated religious and ideological traditions that exist in the world thus molding one into the mold of their own religious, ideological, cultural, geographical and intellectual context)". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of prophetic companion Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him])

If body is healthy, physician deliberates ways of preserving health and if it is sick, physician struggles to return it to the state of health. Similarly, one should try to safeguard a purified, polite, and civilized self and should try to inculcate traits of excellence and purity in the self that is devoid of it. Just like the cure of the factors debilitating and destroying the balanced moderation in the physical system of the body is done through their opposites, similarly the cure for diseases of the self is also done through their opposites. For example, ignorance is cured through education, cure of illness of stinginess is through generosity, arrogance through humility, lust through putting up obstacles in front of the flood of desires even though it may cause pain and discomfort. Just like the cure for the illnesses of the body is through tolerating the bitterness of medication and suppressing the desires of the self [that are not conducive for cure], similarly the diseases of the self (or soul) are not removed without patiently bearing the bitterness and hardness of spiritual struggle (*Mujahada*). Instead, diseases of the heart require this struggle even more because the end of the diseases of the body happen at death when the soul of a human being leaves the body, but the diseases of the soul remain forever even after death [since the soul never dies]. Diseases born out of heat are not cured with medicines that are cold in nature and have been prescribed by carefully considering the intensity and weakness of the disease in suitable amount. Physicians have setup standards on amounts of various medicines, and they prescribe them in suitable and beneficial amounts commensurate with the disease in the light of these standards. If these standards are not adhered to, illness will increase instead of decreasing.

Same is the state of the diseases of the soul (or self). Spiritual guides should adhere to similar standards when cure is administered for diseases of the soul through their opposites. The standard of medicine is set according to the [level and nature of] illness. Spiritual guides should not put so much burden of spiritual exercises and rigors on their spiritual patients that they cannot endure. Furthermore, a spiritual guide should not prescribe a cure until the nature of illness has been determined correctly. It is obligatory upon a physician in relation to administering cure, to prescribe cure and medication according to the assessment of the illness. If one tries to cure all diseases with the same medicine, then it will not result in anything other than the death of the patient. Similarly, a spiritual guide should not adopt the same method for reformation of [all] students of the spiritual path. If one does that, one will cause the destruction of the hearts of one's spiritual patients. It is obligatory upon a spiritual guide to first diagnose the disease of one's student (seeker in the path of spiritual perfection), review student's specific circumstances, take into consideration one's age and present condition and see how much one is capable of enduring the rigors and intensity of spiritual struggle. After carefully considering all of these matters, a spiritual guide should prescribe a spiritual exercise.

If student (seeker in the path of spiritual perfection) is a beginner [in the spiritual path] and is unaware of the limits [of acceptable human conduct and actions] from the Divine Law then firstly one should be taught the correct ways of doing outer [bodily] cleanliness (personal hygiene and purification), prayers and outer acts of worship. If student is involved in [acquiring and possessing] illegal (*Haram*) material possessions and commits sins then one needs to be stopped [by the teacher or spiritual guide] and forbidden and prevented from living the life of sins [including inner sins of negative and harmful thoughts, feelings and inclinations]. When one's outer existence is purified from the impurities and defilements of outer sins and is enlightened with the light of acts of [Divine] worship, the spiritual guide should examine student's inner being through the indications of outer states and analyze one's morals, manners, character, inclinations, habits and diseases of the heart. If student has more than needed material possessions, then spiritual guide should take it and distribute it in charity so that there is no inclination left in one's heart towards material possessions and is able to focus exclusively on God. Similar if student (seeker in the path of spiritual perfection) has pride, arrogance and a predominant feeling of superiority complex, then one should be sent to a marketplace to stretch out one's hand in begging as these [inner destructive characteristics] do not go away without humiliation, and nothing is more humiliating than begging and one should be obligated to continue doing it until this disease is completely eradicated [from one's inner being]. Pride and arrogance are among the worst diseases of the heart. If a student has the thought of extreme cleanliness (*Nazafah*) of body and dress dominating in one as one may be more inclined towards it, then one should be made to clean the house and broom dirty places or should be given some kitchen work where one has to deal with smoke [from the stove] and [consequently] the pride of extreme cleanliness and being finicky about it does not remain. People who adopt conspicuous consumption in clothes and constantly seek beautiful clothes, there is no difference between them and [soon to be] brides as they are busy all day beautifying

themselves. Furthermore, there is no difference between one worshipping oneself and one worshipping a stone or idol.

Whenever a slave [of God, i.e., a human being] worships [anything or anyone] other than God, one's heart become veiled with God (a curtain or barrier is drawn between one and God). One who worries about a dress for more than its cleanliness and permissibility is a worshipper of one's own self (*Nafs*). Among the subtleties of spiritual struggles is that if a student or seeker [of spiritual path] does not refrain from one of the inner destructive evils, then one's focus and direction is turned away from that negative quality towards a different negative quality that is of a lower degree. For example, a child is first indulged in a game of bat and ball in a school then is inclined from sports to good clothes then from good clothes and pride in self embellishment towards seeking political office and fame and in the end towards life of the Hereafter. If one's heart is not inclined towards abruptly reneging the desire for fame and power, then one should be persuaded to have a lower level of fame and power and should be gradually dissuaded from this [inner destructive] quality. Similarly, if a spiritual guide finds in a student greed for food, then one should be made to adhere to fasting and eating less, then one should be made responsible for preparing delicious food and feed it to others but not eat oneself to such an extent that the self (*Nafs*) becomes accustomed to it, and the power of patience is born in it and the greed comes to an end. Similarly, if a student is young and desires to get married but he is not able to support [the marriage financially as a husband is obligated to support his wife] then he should be made to fast. Sometimes the intense desire does not diminish by fasting. In that case, the seeker (spiritual traveler) should be asked to break one's fast [at its appointed time] with only water [and with no other food] and to not eat bread. On second day, one should break the fast with bread but do not use any meat or any other curry or dishes to such as extent that the intensity of desire comes to an end. There is no better cure than hunger initially.

If spiritual guide sees in the seeker a domination of anger, then one should be ordered to have forbearance, patience and silence and should be asked to work with people who are ill-mannered and should be asked to serve them so that one becomes accustomed to patience by exercising patience on pain inflicted by them. It has been narrated about one saint (spiritual master) who, for the most part, used to work as a manual laborer for such people who were ill-mannered and harsh and using rude language was their habit. He used to bear all pain inflicted by them with patience and restrain his anger [towards them for their ill-behavior]. It was hard for him to do this in the beginning but later on, patience became firmly ingrained in him as a second nature and his name started to be taken as a model of patience by the common folk. Some saints found in themselves weakness and cowardice. They cured [these undesirable qualities in] themselves by travelling in the surface of the sea when weather was cold, and waves were disturbed and turbulent. Some saints were slow in the beginning and they cured themselves by standing head down all night until the self became perturbed by its intensity and agreed to standing on feet [in worship]. Some people removed from their hearts, the love for wealth and material possessions by putting money in the river. They preferred putting money in river over giving them away in charity because in charity there was a danger of ostentation.

These examples show us the methods of curing the diseases of the heart. The purpose here is not to explain the medicine for every disease. Medicines and methods of cure will be explained in next pages. At this time, the purpose is only to explain that the cure for every [spiritual] disease is possible by acting on its opposite. God has explained the method of cure in His Book in just one sentence [as follows]:

وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِۦ وَنَهَى ٱلنَّفْسَ عَنِ ٱلْهَوَىٰ
فَإِنَّ ٱلْجَنَّةَ هِىَ ٱلْمَأْوَىٰ

"One who was fearful [in this world] of standing before one's Lord [on the Day of Reckoning] and restrained one's self from [all] desires from the lower self (*Hawa* or stubborn wrong-headed follies) [that are harmful for one's individual and collective well-being in one's material and immaterial (spiritual) lives], Heaven will be the [final] destination of such a one." (Qur'an, Chapter 79, Verses 40-41)

The real and the most important thing in spiritual struggle is that one should complete what one has determined to do. Hence, if one made a determination to reject all lusts and comes across some difficulties in the way, then one retains the courage to overcome these difficulties and obstacles and by struggling against these difficulties to fulfill one's determination is the real spiritual struggle. If one does not fulfill one's determination [to forge ahead in the spiritual path against all adversities] then the self will get accustomed to it (i.e., reneging one's determination) and one will be destroyed [in terms of missing out on achieving the real purpose of one's life and attainment of eternal happiness and endless triumph through upward spiritual ascendency and instead, taking a downward trajectory leading to eternal loss and grief] due to it. If God-forbid, one reneges on one's determination, then one should punish one's self as explained in the chapter on "Self-Examination and Taking Oneself to Task for all of One's Shortcoming and Vices" (Chapter 18). If one fails to punish one's self [for its slackness and reneging the determination to forge ahead spiritually], the lower self will dominate [such a person] and all spiritual struggle done so far will get wasted.

Diseases of the Soul and Signs of Health

Let it be known that every bodily organ has been created for a specific purpose. If the action for which it has been created is not performed by it or performed with pain and difficulty, then it will be said that the organ has lost its health. The illness (or deformity) of hand is that it loses its ability to grasp. Illness of the eye is that it becomes deprived of the ability to see. Similarly, the illness of the heart (or soul) is that it becomes incapable of performing the specific task for which it has been created and that [specific task of the heart] is Divine knowledge, wisdom, Divine Gnosis, Divine love, Divine worship, finding pleasure in Divine remembrance, to give preference to Him over every single desire of one and to get help from all of one's desires and organs to achieve this [objective]. Hence God says:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ ٱلْجِنَّ وَٱلْإِنسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

"I have not created *Jinns* and human beings except for My worship." (Qur'an, Chapter 51, Verse 56)

In any case, every organ has some benefit peculiar to it. The peculiar action of the heart is wisdom and Gnosis of God. The special quality in human being is through which one is distinguished from animals because the power to eat, drink, see and copulate also exists in animals. The distinguishing quality of human being is that one perceives the reality of things and this is a fact that the origin of all things, their inventor and creator is God. If someone has knowledge of a thing but does not know and recognize its inventor, then it will be said that one is not even aware of the reality of that thing. The sign of knowing is love. One who knows God will also love Him and sign of love is that nothing in the world is given preference over Him. One in whose heart is the love of something other than God, the heart of such a one is sick, and it is like a stomach that gets used to eating dirt as opposed to eating bread. Such a stomach is termed as sick. These are the signs of diseases of the heart and it is known from this explanation that all hearts are sick except for the ones that God has protected.

Some diseases are so discreet that the patient is not even aware of them. The situation with diseases of the heart is like that and patient is not even aware of these diseases. That's why, one exercises negligence with them. If one comes to know of the state of the illness, one will lose the courage to exercise patience over the bitterness of its medication. It is because the medicine for diseases of the heart is opposing the lusts and desires and the pain of doing that is more painful than one experiences in the throes of death. Even if one has the ability to exercise patience, an expert doctor is not found who can correctly administer cure [for the diseases of the soul]. The doctors or curers of the diseases of the heart can be [religious] scholars but their own hearts are involved in [such] diseases. When they are unable to cure themselves, how can they cure others? In that respect, the diseases of the heart have exacerbated and became incurable. The knowledge of curing the diseases of the heart has become extinct as neither the people remained who understand these diseases nor the ones who would cure them. People are wholly submerged in the love of worldliness and are indulged in actions whose outer [appearance] is worship and inner [reality] is ostentation and show off. Until now, the signs of real diseases were mentioned. Now listen to the signs of health acquired as a result of cure.

In this connection, the disease that needs to be cured should be kept in sight. If that disease is, for example, stinginess which is destructive [due to its intrinsic ability to obliterate one's spirituality, spiritual path, and spiritual ambitions] and creates remoteness from God, its cure can be by means of spending wealth and material possessions. But sometimes, limits are crossed in spending and it enters into wasteful spending which is also a disease. The desired level is of moderation [between all extremes]. In spending, the middle level is the objective that is in the middle of [the two extremes of] wasteful spending and stinginess. If you want to find the point of moderation and the middle of two things, then its method is to cast a glance at the

actions that have come into existence by means of some inner quality. If that action seems easy and pleasant, then one should know that the inner quality [tied to that action] is dominant over self (*Nafs*). For example, if spending wealth on needy and deserving is more detestable than accumulating and hoarding wealth then one should know that the inner trait of miserliness is dominant over the self. In that case, one should make arrangements for spending on and returning the rights of the deserving persons. If the [lower] self finds pleasure in spending on non-deserving persons and this spending seems easier than saving, then it can be understood from this that wasteful spending is dominant over the self. In that case, one should resort to saving and stopping the wealth from wasteful spending. The self (*Nafs*) should be watched over and safeguarded like that and it should be seen and noticed which actions are hard for the self and which ones are easy. This watchfulness and safeguarding should continue until the desire and inclination towards wealth and material possessions comes to an end so that the self is neither interested in spending nor is it inclined towards hoarding. Instead, it becomes like water which is stopped when needed and used when needed. Furthermore, there should be no preference of spending over saving [or vice versa]. A heart that reaches this degree [of balanced moderation in all matters shunning all extremes] will stay cleansed and purified of all destructive evils and negative inner character traits.

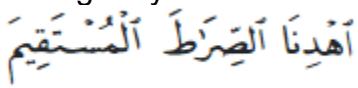
To reach God [in a state of Divine Gnosis], it is imperative to detach the heart from all entrapments and entanglements of the world so that when the [Divine] command comes to forge ahead in the journey from this world (i.e., death) then the heart is neither inclined towards anything [material] nor is it focused on any means [of materialism as the journey out of this world is immaterial]. In this state [of attachment with the Divine], the return of the self into the Divine Presence will be the return of the subtle [existence of] self (*Nafs*) who is pleased with its Lord and the Lord is also pleased with it. Such are the selves that are counted among the class of the Prophets (*Anbiya*), saints and Gnostics (*Siddiqeen*), martyrs (*Shuhada*), and the righteous (*Sulaha*) [who are among the four topmost categories of human beings in that order in terms of their achievements in the immaterial and transcendental spiritual realm and are the achievers of the highest degrees of eternal happiness and endless triumph]. God has addressed such a self with these words:

يَٰٓأَيَّتُهَا ٱلنَّفْسُ ٱلْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ﴿٢٧﴾ ٱرْجِعِىٓ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً ﴿٢٨﴾

“O the self at peace! Return to your Lord in a state of you being pleased with Him and He being pleased with you.” (Qur’an, Chapter 89, Verses 27-28)

The middle level in between the two extreme level is extremely subtle. Instead, it would be better to say that it is thinner than a hair and sharper than a sword. Those people who will remain firm on this difficult path in this worldly life, will pass over the bridge of *Sirat* (a narrow bridge over Hell on the other end of which is Paradise, which is thinner than hair and sharper than a sword and every person will have to pass over that bridge on the Day of Judgment as explained by the Prophetic teachings) with safety. This is because human beings incline to one side or the other of this middle path of balanced moderation (*Sirat al-Mustaqeem*) and hence, the heart is associated with the side it

inclines towards. People who have pious awe, reverence, and fear of God (*Muttaqeen*) are the ones who have remained closer to middle path of balanced moderation (*Sirat al-Mustaqeem*) than being remote from it. In view of the difficulty of retaining perseverance in the middle path of balanced moderation (*Sirat al-Mustaqeem*), the opening chapter [of Qur'an known as *Surah al-Fatiha*] which is recited in obligatory daily prayers seventeen times every day, this prayer has been made obligatory:



"[O God!] Guide us on to the straight path (middle path of balanced moderation) (*Sirat al-Mustaqeem*)." (Qur'an, Chapter 1, Verse 6)

Even though stepping on the straight path of balanced moderation is very difficult, one should not exercise any negligence in staying as close as possible to it. If one is unable to achieve exact balanced moderation, one should understand this very clearly that eternal salvation is only dependent on righteous deeds and righteous deeds are born out of beautiful morals, manners, inner qualities, character traits and dispositions. In this respect, every slave [of God] should [constantly] examine one's qualities, morals, manners, inner character traits and dispositions so that if there are any shortcomings, they can be removed.

The Method of Finding One's Own Faults

Whosoever God intends to do good with, He informs one of one's own faults. A person of deep [inner] insight does not have faults hidden from oneself and when one becomes aware of the faults then curing them becomes easy, but most people are unaware of their own faults. The situation is such that one can see miniscule faults in others but cannot see big faults within oneself. There are four ways of recognizing one's own faults:

First Method: One should attend the gathering of such a spiritual guide who is aware of the faults of the self and its hidden destructive potential. One should listen to such a spiritual guide and should act upon the instructions regarding spiritual struggle. Such is the state of a seeker (*Mureed*) with the spiritual guide (*Murshid*) and a student with the teacher. A spiritual guide informs the seeker and a teacher informs the student about one's inner faults and shortcomings and suggests methods of getting rid of them. In this day and age, it's rare to find those who act on this method.

Second Method: One should search for a sincere, loyal, intelligent and God conscious friend and appoint as an overseer over one's own self so that such a friend can keep an eye on one's inner states and actions and whatever fault is seen in one's outer or inner being should warn one about it. The great predecessor scholars of the path of God have followed this method.

Umar (May God be pleased with him - a helper and companion of Prophet Muhammad [Peace and blessings of God be upon him] and the second Caliph) used to say: "May

God have mercy upon the person who would inform me of my faults". Once Salman al-Farsi (May God be pleased with him - another Prophetic companion) came to him and he asked him: "If you have heard of any bad thing about me then please let me know so I can reform myself". Salman (May God be pleased with him) tried to excuse himself from responding but when Umar (May God be pleased with him) insisted, he told him: "I have heard that you have two dishes (food items) on your dining mat and that you have two pairs of clothes, one for night and one for day". Umar (May God be pleased with him) asked: "Have you come to know of anything else besides that". Salman (May God be pleased with him) replied: "No". Umar (May God be pleased with him) said: "Be satisfied regarding these two matters [as none of them is true as I only eat one food item for meal and have only one pair of clothes]". Umar (May God be pleased with him) used to ask Hudhaifa (May God be pleased with him) about his faults and asked him: "You are the co-sharer with the Prophet of the secret about who the hypocrites are. Do you also see any signs of hypocrisy in me?" Consider, how Umar (May God be pleased with him) despite his majesty [as a fearless leader who ruled over a vast area of the world] and high status [as a great spiritual achiever], used to blame himself [for his shortcomings] and stress upon people to tell him about his faults.

One whose intellect is greater and [spiritual] status higher, would not get infected by the disease of self-righteousness or self-conceitedness (*'Ujub* or self-aggrandizement and thinking highly of oneself as being right about everything) other than to a small degree [that also can be removed through spiritual struggle]. Such a person would continuously think of the self as wrong and worthy of being watched over for its wrongdoings instead of being good and pure [the example of Umar (May God be pleased with him) is a case in point]. In this day and age, it is difficult to find friends who will inform one about one's faults without any concession. Most friends like to flatter and do not find any issues with calling a fault an expertise (or something good to be proud of) and think of doing that as fulfilling the rights of friendship [by being good friends]. Some friends have jealous temperament and exaggerate the faults in telling them. Existence of sincere, selfless and true friend is rare. That's why, the Gnostic Dawud Ta-ee (May God have mercy upon him) secluded himself from such people. Some people asked him: "Why do you not meet with people?" He replied: "What would I do by meeting with friends who would not inform me of my faults?"

Those who love the *Deen* (path to God) have the foremost desire that other people would point out their faults to them. The [perceived] humiliation in this world [as a result of being informed of one's faults] is very small compared to the [actual] humiliation of the Hereafter [where there will be repercussions for harboring these faults deep within one's soul]. But now the situation with the people is the opposite. Such friends find themselves in the topmost place in the list of enemies who would inform us of our faults and advise us about them. This is a sign of weakness of our faith that we get offended and angry when our faults are pointed to us. The similitude of bad morals, manners, inner character traits, qualities and dispositions is like that of snakes and scorpions. If these lethal creatures enter into your clothes and someone informs you about their harms and advises you to protect yourself from them or tell you a way to protect yourself from them in that situation then would that person become your enemy?

Absolutely not! We should be grateful to such a person and should try to save ourselves from scorpions, etc., even though the effect of scorpion's poison will stay for a day or two, however, the effect of bad morals, manners, inner character traits, qualities and dispositions will remain even after death. Then what is the matter that we consider our advisor and well-wisher as our enemy and do not eradicate the faults pointed out by such a person? Instead, we start to find faults in that person so that such an individual would not dare to advise us in future. Thinking of our well-wisher [who informs us of our faults] as an enemy is done by those whose hearts have darkened and hardened due to excessive sins [and wrongdoings]. This is the doing of the weakness of faith. O God! Show us the path of rectitude and guidance and inform us of our faults and grant us the power to eradicate them and enable us to thank the people who inform us of our faults. *Ameen*! (Amen!)

Third Method: One should acquire the knowledge of one's faults through the enemies because the eyes of the enemies see nothing but faults, and their tongues say nothing but faults [of their perceived enemies]. My thought about this is that compared to friends who like to flatter, one can benefit more from fault-picking, fault-seeing, and fault-speaking enemies. It is because friends usually praise, and their eyes only see good things and their tongues only speak well. It is true that humans, in their innate nature, reject their enemies and think of everything coming from them as [coming due to their] jealousy. However, the people of insights take advantage of their enemies as well.

Fourth Method: One should mingle with people and whatever faults one sees in them should put them in front and take the self (*Nafs*) to task if they are found in one's own self. A believer is a mirror of a believer [that has been stated and confirmed in a Prophetic narration]. Everyone should see one's own image in the mirror of one's Muslim brother [or sister] and through his or her faults, find out one's own faults and should consider that in the matter of following desires, the temperaments are generally close to each other. Something that is present in one, its part or whole would also be in the other. In the light of these principles, one should find out one's own faults and should cleanse the heart of them. If this method is adopted for inculcating good etiquettes and inner purification, then every person's reformation will happen by itself as there will be no need for a guide and teacher of etiquettes. Someone asked Jesus (Peace be upon him): "Who taught you *Adab* (morals, manners and etiquettes)?" He responded: "No one taught me *Adab* (morals, manners and etiquettes), the ignorance of the ignoramus seemed bad to me, so I separated myself from that". This is the method of the people who do not find a teacher (spiritual guide) who possess qualities like excellence [of character], insight, Divine Gnosis and intelligence, who after being done with the civilization and purification of one's own self, is now busy with the education and civilization of the servants of God (i.e., fellow human beings) and advise them with compassion and guide them to the good path. One who has the company of such a [spiritual] teacher, is as if in possession of a walking hospital where a cure for every [inner] disease [of the soul] is available. One should stay associated with such a teacher who will cure one's [inner] diseases and will save one from destruction.

Cure for the Diseases of the Heart by Means of Rejecting Desires and Lusts and its Transmitted Proofs and Evidence from Divine Law

If you contemplate on the above details, the doors of insights will open up [for you] and with the light of knowledge and certitude, the diseases of the soul and the method of cure will become clear. However, if you are incapable of knowing the diseases and their cure through contemplation, there should still be the following of this way and ascertaining them through faith in the unseen (*Iman bi al-Ghaib*) because the degree of faith is separate and the degree of knowledge is separate from it. Knowledge is attained after faith. God says:

يَرْفَعِ ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ مِنكُمْ وَٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا۟ ٱلْعِلْمَ دَرَجَٰتٍ

"God will raise the ranks [of honor and Divine intimacy and nearness] of those among you who have faith and those who are endowed with knowledge." (Qur'an, Chapter 58, Verse 11)

Therefore, one who ascertained this without asking for justification that the only path to reach God (in the state of Divine Presence) is opposing the desires [and lusts from the lower base self], attained the rank of those who believed in faith, and the one who attained to the reality of this [Divine] secret is among those who have been endowed with knowledge along with faith. God has promised goodness to both the people of faith and the people of knowledge. God says:

وَكُلًّا وَعَدَ ٱللَّهُ ٱلْحُسْنَىٰ

"And to both, God has promised goodness." (Qur'an, Chapter 4, Verse 95)

Evidences from the Divine Law: The reality that abandoning the desires is the only way of reaching God (attaining to the Divine Presence) has been attested to and evidenced by the verses [of the Divine book – Qur'an], Prophetic traditions (*Hadiths*) and saying of the learned scholars. God says:

وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِۦ وَنَهَى ٱلنَّفْسَ عَنِ ٱلْهَوَىٰ ﴿٤٠﴾

فَإِنَّ ٱلْجَنَّةَ هِىَ ٱلْمَأْوَىٰ ﴿٤١﴾

"One who feared standing before one's Lord and restrained the self from base desires and stubborn wrong-headed follies (*Hawa*), the final abode of such a one will be Heaven." (Qur'an, Chapter 79, Verses 40-41)

أُولَٰئِكَ ٱلَّذِينَ ٱمْتَحَنَ ٱللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ

"These are the people whose hearts God has purified for pious awe, reverence and fear of God (*Taqwa*)." (Qur'an, Chapter 49, Verse 3)

Its explanation is that God has removed from their hearts the love for desires from the lower self. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

المؤمن بين خمس شدائد مؤمن يحسده ومنافق يبغضه وكافر يقاتله وشيطان يضله ونفس تنازعه

"A believer is in the middle of five hardships: Another believer is jealous of one, hypocrite harbors enmity towards one, unbeliever fights against one, Satan misguides one, and the self (*Nafs*) disputes with one". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Makarim al-Ikhlaq* on the authority of Anas [May God be pleased with him])

This prophetic tradition informs that self is a disputing arguing enemy and [spiritual] struggle against it is a must. According to a narration, God revealed to Prophet David (Dawud) (Pease of God be upon him): "O David! Make your companions fearful of making desires from the lower selves easy because such hearts' intellects are linked with desires and they (hearts) are [supposed to be] linked with Me". Jesus (Peace of God be upon him) said: "May the glad tidings be for the person who leaves the [currently] present desires and lusts for the sake of things promised for the future (in other words, Paradise)". He furthermore said:

المجاهد من جاهد نفسه في طاعة الله عز وجل

"A striver [in the path of God] is the one who in obeying God, performs the [spiritual] struggle against the lower self [and its desires]". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Tirmidhi* and *Ibn Majah* on the authority of Fadhala bin Sa'eed [May God be pleased with him])

Sayings of the Saints and Gnostics: Sufyan al-Thauri (May God have mercy upon him) said: "I have not found any cure harder than curing the self. The self is sometimes beneficial and sometimes detrimental". Abu al-Abbas Musali (May God have mercy upon him) used to say this to his self: "You neither enjoy the world like princes nor do you perform spiritual struggle like a worshipper. Will you be getting me jailed in between the Heaven and the Hell? Do you have no shame?" Hasan al-Basri (May God have mercy upon him) said: "Compared to a wild horse, the self is more in need of a steed [as it runs more rampant than a wild untamed horse]". Yahya bin Mu'adh (May God have mercy upon him) said: "Fight against the self with the sword of spiritual struggle and that sword is that one eats less, sleeps less, speaks only when needed and be patient with the hardships received from the people. Desires [from the lower base self] and lusts come to an end by eating less, sleeping less brings about purity in one's intentions, talking less saves one from trials and tribulations, and exercising patience on pain and hardships received from people results in success in reaching

one's objective and destination. The most difficult matter for one is forbearance at the time of pain and sufferings [inflicted by others] and patience at the time of adversity. Hence, when desires and lusts are born in the self or the pleasure and sweetness of useless talking gets intensified, at that time, one should take the sword of eating less out from the sheath of sleeping less and through the hands of silence, inflict a fatal strike so that the self desists from its oppression, and tribulations coming from it cool off and heart becomes cleansed and purified from the filth of desires and lusts. If such a treatment is meted out to the self, it will become cleansed, purified, illumined and light-weighted, fields of righteousness will be its pathways, valleys of [Divine] obedience will be its passageways and it will run in these fields and valleys like a horse galloping unabated in plains or stroll like a king in a garden".

Yahya bin Mu'adh (May God have mercy upon him) also used to say: "Human being has three enemies: world, Satan and self. Safeguard yourself from the world (or worldliness) through abstinence [from indulgence in it], achieve domination over Satan by opposing it [and its preaching and persuasions], and subjugate the self by abandoning the desires and lusts". One wise spiritual guide said: "One who has been dominated by self is a prisoner of lusts, one's feet get chained by desires, one is no longer guided by the intellect, they (desires and lusts) take hold of one and take wherever they want, and no benefit can be provided to the heart. All people of knowledge and wisdom agree that the blessings of the life after (i.e., Heaven) are not achieved without saying farewell to the [material] blessings of this world [while immaterial (spiritual) blessings of this world are not from this world]". Abu Yahya Warraq (May God have mercy upon him) said: "Whoever pleases the organs by indulging in desires and lusts, sowed in the land of the heart seeds of shame". Wohaib ibn al-Ward (May God have mercy upon him) said: "Anything other than bread is from the desires of the lower self". He furthermore said: "One who loves the desires and lusts of this world should get ready for the humiliation of the life after". When Prophet Joseph (Yusuf) (Peace of God be upon him) was made responsible for the treasures of Egypt and he led a magnificent procession of twelve thousand elites of Egypt on a path then Zulaikha (the wife of the minister of Egypt who fell in love with Prophet Joseph [Peace be upon him] when he was young who later on married him after his decades of incarceration, release and appointment as the in-charge of Egypt's treasures) said to him: "O Joseph! Greed and desires made kings the slaves and patience and pious awe, reverence and fear of God (*Taqwa*) made slaves the kings". Prophet Joseph (Peace be upon him) said that that is true in accordance with the following saying of God:

إِنَّهُۥ مَن يَتَّقِ وَيَصۡبِرۡ فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجۡرَ ٱلۡمُحۡسِنِينَ

"Verily, one who desists from sins in a state of pious awe, reverence and fear of God and is patient, God does not let [such good] deeds [and sincere efforts] go to waste for such doers of good." (Qur'an, Chapter 12, Verse 90)

Junaid Baghdadi (May God have mercy upon him) said: "One night I was awake and tried to indulge in prayers, but I could not achieve the [inner] pleasure that I was used to. I tried to sleep but could not, tried to sit up but could not. Forced by this, I came out

and saw that a man wrapped up in a blanket is laying on the side of the road. When he heard my footsteps, he asked me to come to him. I said to him: 'You did not inform me about your arrival!' He said: 'I prayed to God to incline your heart towards me'. I said: 'God heard your prayer, now tell me your purpose [of coming here]'. He said: 'O Abu al-Qasim! Tell me, what is the cure for the [lower] self?' I said: 'When one opposes one's desires then self feels pain and torture by it but this is the very cure and medicine of it'. He said: 'O self! Listen to it! I gave you the same reply seven times, but you did not listen to me. Now Junaid is ascertaining the same thing. Will you not even listen to him?'" Someone asked Umar bin Abdul Aziz (May God have mercy upon him): "When should I speak?" He replied: "When you have the desire to stay quiet". He asked: "When should I stay quiet?" He replied: "When you desire to speak". Ali (May God be pleased with him) said: "One who desires to go to Paradise should stay away from desires in this world". Malik bin Dinar (May God have mercy upon him) used to go to the marketplace and when he saw something good and his heart inclined towards buying it, he used to give comfort to his self, admonishing it to have patience and used to say: "I swear by God! I prohibit you from it because of your magnificence and greatness [due to the potential you have for ascending supreme spiritual heights]".

Unanimous Decision of the Scholars: All learned scholars and people of wisdom have a unanimous decision that there is only one way of acquiring eternal happiness and endless triumph (*Sa'adah*) in the Hereafter and that is to keep the self stay away from stubborn wrong-headed folly (*Hawa* - emanating from egoism and self-delusional conviction about being right about everything) and greed and stopping it from following the desires and lusts from the lower self. In this respect, it is obligatory to believe in this decision and to act upon it. The upshot and summary of spiritual struggle is that the self takes advantage only as needed of those things that will not go with one in the grave like clothing, marriage, eating, drinking, residence, etc., that are essential for life. Crossing the limits of needed quantity of these objects will mean that one loves these things and after death, would want to come back to the world and only that person can desire coming back to the world who does not have any share in the recompense and reward of the Hereafter. The companionship of this world is a sickness and there is only one way of getting rid of this sickness and that is that one's heart is fully indulged in God's love, Gnosis, remembrance and contemplation and one remains contented with worldly things (means) only to the extent that they do not become impediments in this indulgence. This state [of affairs] only comes about with the grace and blessings of God and through the power and strength granted by Him.

Four Types of People: Those who are not able to reach this real spiritual exercise should certainly try to reach degrees closer to it. In this respect, there are four types of people. Some people are such that their hearts are absorbed [fully] in the remembrance of God. Barring the exception of economic need, their attention is not on the world. These people are among the category of *Siddiqeen* (second highest category of people after the Prophets also known as Gnostics or those who are devoted to truth, and as a result of spiritual struggle have attained Divine Gnosis, friendship and

intimacy of God). This [high spiritual] rank is only attained after a lofty prolonged spiritual struggle and abandoning desires and lusts for a long time. Second type includes those people whose heart are submerged every moment in the world (worldliness or material existence). Even if they remember God, it is only on the tongue and heart has nothing to do with it. They are included in the category of those heading to destruction [in the life after as they did not work for the eternal life and their focus was entirely on the material life of this world]. Third type of people includes those who are engaged in both the *Deen* (path to God or Divine guidance) and the world but the *Deen* dominates the heart. They will get Divine retribution but will get rid of it soon commensurate with the extent of the dominance of Divine concerns on the heart. Fourth type of people includes those who are engaged in both the *Deen* (path to God) and the world but on their heart worldly concerns dominate the Divine concerns. These people will be subjected to Divine punishment for comparatively longer duration but in the end will come out of it after facing it because even though world dominated their hearts, they were not deprived of the *Deen* (path to God or Divine guidance) either. The power of Divine remembrance will be the source of their salvation.

Pleasures from Permissible Things: Some people think that deriving pleasure from permissible things is acceptable and it would not cause remoteness from God. This thought of theirs is wrong. The reality [or truth of the matter] was revealed to those people who have termed the love of worldliness as the root of all sins and in whose opinion all righteous deeds go down to waste in this love. Having permissible things in excess of one's need, even though it is permissible, is included in the worldliness and distances one from the Creator. Ibrahim al-Khawas (May God have mercy upon him) said: "Once I was residing on Mount Likam and saw pomegranate on a tree. I wanted to eat it, so I plucked one off the tree and when I ate it, it was sour. I threw it away and went about on my way. I saw a man lying on the path who was repeatedly getting stung by bees. He called out to me: 'O Ibrahim!' I replied back in amazement: 'Who are you and how do you even know me?' He said: 'One who knows God (have Divine Gnosis), nothing is hidden from such a one'. I said: 'You are a Godly saint. Why don't you pray to God for yourself that He gets rid of the bees for you and the pain inflicted by them'. He replied: 'You are also a Godly saint. Why did you not pray to God to remove the desire of pomegranate from your heart? The pain of the [stung of] bees is only in this world. The sufferings caused by desires and lusts will not leave you even after death'. I could not come up a response to that and proceeded along". Sari al-Saqati (May God have mercy upon him) said: "For forty years, my heart desires that I dip bread in the date nectar and eat it, but I have not accepted this suggestion from my heart".

Refraining from Permissible Matters: Reformation of the self is not possible until it is prevented from [indulging in] the pleasures of permissible matters. It is because one is liable to exceed the pleasures of permissible matters and getting indulged in impermissible matters. For example, if one wants one's tongue to not get indulged in backbiting and useless talk then one should only utter the words of Divine remembrance and matters related to spiritual needs. One should observe silence in remaining

matters, even though they may be permissible (*Mubah*), until the lust of speech (talking) comes to an end and tongue gets used to the truth (sensibility in utterance of words with observance of morality, ethics and rectitude). In this case, even speaking will become [Divine] worship and silence will also become worship. Such is also the state of the eye. If it is used to seeing every good thing then someday it will also look at something bad. This is because the thing that causes lust for what's legal and permissible, also gives birth to the desire for forbidden and wrong. In this respect, lust is one and it is obligatory to stop it from forbidden (*Haram*). If one does not get used to contentment with only the necessary, then lust will overwhelm one and this lust that was initially related to permissible, will exceed its limit and reach the forbidden (*Haram*). This is the least of the harms of permissible (*Mubah*) and there are numerous other harms besides it. Among these harms is that the self (*Nafs*) becomes happy with worldly pleasures and it searches for peace and tranquility for itself and gets so intoxicated in their (i.e., worldly pleasures) intoxication that one becomes oblivious to oneself and forgets oneself. This happiness and resulting intoxication, is a fatal poison that spreads in all of one's veins and being and removes from one's heart the remembrance of God, the fear of accountability of life after, and horrific events of the Day of Judgment. This state is referred to as "the death of the heart".

Disciplining the Self: Some people of the heart tested their hearts and found that in their happiness in worldly pleasures, hearts are rebellious, disobedient [to Divine guidance] and deviant from Divine remembrance, while in the state of sorrow they are obedient, limpid and moved with Divine remembrance. They concluded from this that the state of perpetual sorrow and remoteness from the means of [worldly outer] happiness [like food, drink, clothing, wealth, fame, social life, materialism, conspicuous consumption etc.] is the cause of salvation. Hence, they made their selves (*Nufus*) get inured to exercising patience with all forms of lusts and desires whether they were allowed (*Halal*) or forbidden (*Haram*). They knew there will be [Divine] accountability for [even] permissible desires and [Divine] retribution for impermissible desires and the dubious desires [that are in a gray area in between the permissible and impermissible] will be a cause for reprehension. Retribution is a manifest retribution while accountability and reprehension are also forms of retribution [that are hidden]. These purified souls tried to save their selves from [Divine] retribution of accountability by staying away from even the allowed (*Halal*), and liberated their selves from the incarceration and hold of desires and thus granted themselves eternal liberation and dominion of both the worlds (this one and the one coming after this). They found inner peace, satisfaction, and acclimation with Divine remembrance, and in order to get their selves inured to [Divine] obedience, they dealt with their selves in a manner similar to the one being done with a hawk. That is, a hawk is initially kept in a dark room and its eyes are sewn so that it does not remain used to flying in the air. It is then familiarized with its master by feeding it meat so that it starts to recognize its master and comes running towards one when it is called out. Similar is the state of the self (*Nafs*). Self does not get accustomed to its Lord (God) until it is made oblivious to those [wrong] habits, through solitude and abstention, such as ears listening to unnecessary talk, eyes

seeing unnecessary things, and tongue uttering unnecessary words and protecting [organs] from them. After passing through this stage, self is nourished with the nourishment of Divine remembrance and glorification so that it gets enamored with and accustomed to its Lord and Owner and all worldly entanglements and attachments get dissevered. This is hard on the self of the spiritual traveler (*Mureed*) but when it gets used to them through unceasing spiritual strivings then the same solitude provides the self with its pleasure and the same detachment provides source of its enticement [and enrichment]. In this respect, the spiritual traveler is like a baby who has been weaned off of milk. At first, the baby cries a lot due to the deprivation of milk because for two years milk was the only diet and now all of a sudden, the baby has been deprived of that. That's why, the baby cries, throws fits, does not eat or drink anything but gradually starts to take other nourishments until even the thought of milk ceases to exist. The food baby detested starts to be acceptable.

Same is the state of a riding animal. Initially, fastening the saddle, tightening the reins, and mounting it is very difficult. The riding animal vexes its rider but if the rider does it intelligently and gets it accustomed to the riding gear, its rebellion gets converted into obedience. Initially, it is captured and tied in chains and ropes but gradually it becomes so disciplined that wherever the rider leaves it, it does not even move from there whether it is tied or not. Just like birds and domesticated animals are disciplined and reined, self is also disciplined. Disciplining of the self is that it is restrained from happiness with worldly blessings and pleasures, prohibited from seeing and using them, and is restrained from everything that will not help it after death, and it is being told that there is no use of loving such things that cannot help one in the Hereafter and leave one stranded on a station along the way [towards the final destination of one's real purpose of life]. When self develops certitude of this reality that no matter how beloved is a thing from this world, there will certainly be a separation from it then instead of getting attached to these ephemeral and temporary things, it gets attached to eternal and permanent things like Divine remembrance that will stay with one even in the grave and will remove from it its horrors. However, self develops this certitude after exercising patience for a few days (i.e., short worldly existence). Compared to the eternal life, worldly life spans only a few days. We do not find any intelligent person who is not willing to endure the hardships of travel for a few days for the sake of eternal relief and comfort of the stay [at one's final destination] or willing to learn a new skill for a few months or years for the sake of living a peaceful life for years. It can be seen that compared to eternity, worldly life is not even like one day compared to one's entire lifetime. When hardships, pain and sufferings are borne for this life which is equivalent to a few days [compared to the eternal life that has no end], then why they cannot be borne for the eternal life?

The Method of Spiritual Struggle and Exercises: This method is separate for every individual, rather it is more correct to say that every person is informed of the method of spiritual struggle and exercises according to one's temperament (the state of one's inner being). However, this much is the same for every person that whatever from the

worldly means causes happiness, one should detach from that (i.e., through an inner detachment of the heart). For example, those who get happiness from material possessions, wealth and fame should remove their love from their hearts, those who get happiness from their pleasant talk and impressiveness of their speeches should abrogate such thoughts, those who get happiness from political power, control, governance, reputation and abundance of students should detach their hearts from such thoughts. If they are unhappy, sad, and worried due to being deprived of these things then understand that Qur'an made the following proclamation about such people:

وَرَضُوا۟ بِٱلْحَيَوٰةِ ٱلدُّنْيَا وَٱطْمَأَنُّوا۟ بِهَا

"And they have become contended with the worldly life and have become indulged in it [to the extent that it has become their source of satisfaction, although it is detrimental to them in the overall scheme of things]." (Qur'an, Chapter 10, Verse 7)

These means of worldliness act a fatal poison for the spiritual traveler (*Mureed*). One should adopt solitude after detaching oneself from them and separating oneself from people, one should guard one's heart so that every moment, it is engaged in God's remembrance and contemplation and should keep an eye on all desires, lusts and insinuations that intrude in this [Divine] remembrance and contemplation. One should remove such desires, lusts, and insinuations by getting rid of their roots or eradicate the means that result in the appearance of these insinuations and lusts. Throughout one's life, one should continue with this self-accountability and contemplation and should carry on this process of their removal and eradication. The [spiritual] struggle and striving of [the purification of] the self only ends at death [for a true and determined spiritual traveler who truly cares about this spiritual struggle which is for the sake of becoming a better person devoid of all negativities and imbued with all positivities in order to achieve the real purpose of this life that results in eternal happiness and endless success].

Signs of Good Morals, Manners, Character, Inner Disposition and Qualities

Some people are such that they are unaware of their [inner] faults and deem their paltry spiritual struggle as the last destination of their [spiritual] journey and deem staying away from lewdness as the pinnacle of spiritual struggle. They get into this misleading impression that they have disciplined their selves and have made their morals, manners, inner character and disposition good and are in no need of any [further] spiritual struggle nor do they need any striving in the spiritual path. In order to remove the complacency of such people, it is imperative to list the signs of good morals, manners, inner character, and disposition. In brief, they should understand that good morals, manners, inner character, and disposition is faith, and bad morals, manners, inner character, and disposition is hypocrisy. Qur'an has listed the qualities of believers

and hypocrites. They are all the results and outcomes of good or bad morals, manners, inner character, and disposition. God says in Qur'an:

وَعِبَادُ ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنِ ٱلَّذِينَ يَمۡشُونَ عَلَى ٱلۡأَرۡضِ هَوۡنٗا وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ ٱلۡجَٰهِلُونَ قَالُواْ سَلَٰمٗا ٦٣

وَٱلَّذِينَ يَبِيتُونَ لِرَبِّهِمۡ سُجَّدٗا وَقِيَٰمٗا ٦٤

"The special servants of the Merciful One are those who walk on earth with humility and when the ignoramus folks talk to them ignorance, they say 'Peace!' [to dispel ignorance and evil which they refrain from indulging in and push back on all such persuasions and enticements] and [furthermore,] they are the ones who spend their nights prostrating and standing before their Lord [in a state of awe, reverence and devotion seeking His Countenance, close proximity and intimacy]." (Qur'an, Chapter 25, Verses 63-64)

These Verses are the Criterions: One on whom one's inner state becomes dubious, should evaluate oneself in the light of these verses [from Qur'an]. The presence of these qualities is a sign of good morals, manners, inner character and disposition and their absence is a sign of bad morals, manners, inner character, and disposition. If one has some of these qualities and some absent, one should protect the ones that are present and strive to achieve and inculcate the ones that are absent. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) mentioned uncountable number of qualities of believing servants [of God] and through them pointed to the excellences of good morals, manners, inner character, and disposition. He once said:

لا يؤمن احدكم حتى يحب لاخيه ما يحب لنفسه

"No one can be a believer (one who has faith in God) until one likes for one's brother [or sister] what one likes for oneself". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Anas [May God be pleased with him]) [Here the term "brother" refers to every human being thus entering the entire humanity in one's concern making it worthy of one's care and compassion.]

من كان يؤمن بالله واليوم الآخر فليكرم ضيفه

"One who believes in God and on the Day of Judgment should honor one's guest." (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Abu Shareeh al-Khaza'ee [May God be pleased with him])

In another tradition it says "[One who believes in God and on the Day of Judgment] should honor one's neighbor". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him])

In another tradition it says:

فليقل خيرا اوليصمت

"[One who believes in God and on the Day of Judgment] should speak good or stay quiet". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him])

In one place, he declared a person with good morals, manners, inner character, and disposition (*Ikhlaq*) as a believer. He said:

اكمل المؤمنين ايمانا احسنهم اخلاقا

"Among the believers, one is the most perfected in faith who is the best in good morals, manners, inner character and disposition (*Ikhlaq*)."

He once said:

اذا رأيتم المؤمن صموتا وقورا فادنوا منه فانه يلقى الحكمة

"If you see a believer as quiet and dignified then get close to such a one because one is being [Divinely] instructed in wisdom." (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Ibn Majah* on the authority of Abu Khalad [May God be pleased with him])

He said:

من سرته حسنته وساءته سيئته فهو مؤمن

"One who finds one's good deeds as good and evil as evil is a believer." (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Musnad Ahmed, at-Tabarani* and *Hakim* on the authority of Abu Musa al-Ash'ari [May God be pleased with him])

لا يحل لمؤمن ان ينظر الى اخيه بنظرة توذيه

"It is not [even] permissible for a believer (i.e., it's forbidden) that one [even] looks at one's brother with a harm-inflicting look." (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Ibn al-Mubarak fi az-Zuhd*)

He furthermore said:

لا يحل لمسلم ان يرد ع مسلما

"It is not [even] permissible for a Muslim (i.e., it's forbidden) that one rebukes a Muslim."

انما يتجالس المتجالسان بامانة الله عز وجل فلا يحل لاحدهما ان يغشى على

"Two people sit together with the trust of God. That's why, it is not permissible for one to reveal anything about one's brother to others that one may dislike to be revealed."

Some [wise and scholarly people] have listed as the signs of good morals, manners, inner character and disposition that one has shyness and modesty (*Haya*), does not harm anyone (i.e., any fellow human being), is righteous and purified [with inner purity of the heart and soul], is truthful, doer of good deeds in abundance, makes less mistakes, stays away from useless talk, is dignified, patient, grateful, tolerant, kind, compassionate and congenial; does not bad mouth, talk evil, back bite, complains behind people's back, impetuous, harbor enmities, practices miserliness and jealousy; disapproves and loves only for the sake of God. Once Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) was asked about the signs of a believer and hypocrite to which he responded:

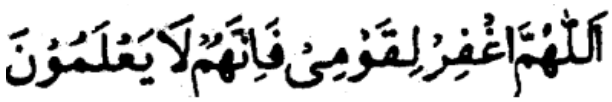
ان المؤمن همته فى الصلاة والصيام والعبادة والمنافق همته فى الطعام والشراب كالبهيمة

"The aspirations and strivings of a believer are in prayers, fasting and [Divine] worship and an unbeliever's aspirations and strivings are in eating and drinking like cattle."

Sayings of the Learned Predecessors: Hatim al-Asm (May God have mercy upon him) said: "A believer is fully engaged in contemplation and drawing lessons [from happenings around one and happenings of the past to oneself or others] and hypocrite is engaged in greed and hopes of long living [causing prevarication in doing the right things]; a believer is despair of everyone other than God [as God is the only One who can benefit and harm, and everyone and everything is subservient to the Divine Will, and all happenings in our lives and around us are strictly according to the Divine Will for a Divinely ordained purpose whose wisdom may or may not be seen by most or all people] while an unbeliever is afraid of everyone other than God. A believer does not sell one's faith [for paltry material and worldly gain] and [instead,] spends one's material possessions and life [in Divine service to gain eternal felicity] while a hypocrite does not give importance to one's faith in front of wealth. A believer weeps even after doing good deeds [due to fear of God and shortcomings in one's good deeds as they may not be up to the par] while a hypocrite smiles even after committing sins [as such a one is under the mistaken assumption that one's evil deeds have no negative consequences that are injurious to oneself and one's standing before God]. A believer sows seeds [of goodness] but is still afraid of the consequences [because of shortcomings in one's actions that may not lead to Divine acceptance] while an unbeliever does not sow any seeds [of goodness] but wastes them and still has good expectations. A believer

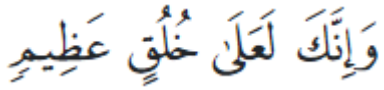
admonishes right and admonishes against wrong and works for improvement and reformation of God's creations while a hypocrite spreads evil.

The first test of having good morals, manners, inner character, and disposition is that one remains patient on others' bad behaviors, attitudes, and manners. If one is suspecting bad morals, manners, inner character, and disposition from others then understand that one is oneself possessing these traits. Good morals, manners, inner character, and disposition is the name of remaining patient in the face of pain inflicted by others and remaining forbearing when they give one hard time. Once Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) was covering himself around with a thick shawl from Najran and going somewhere with Anas bin Malik (May God be pleased with him). They came across a Bedouin (a desert Arab who were generally regarded as rude, rough, and uncivilized) who grabbed an end of the shawl and pulled it so hard that the shawl around Prophet's neck tightened and ended up suffocating him. The Bedouin asked: "O Muhammad! Give me some from what God has given you!" Prophet (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) looked at him and smiled and asked for something to be given to the Bedouin. (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Anas bin Malik [May God be pleased with him]). When the tribe of Quraish (whom Prophet Muhammad [Peace and blessings of God be upon him] belonged to) vexed and beat him then instead of complaining, he made this supplication:



"O God! Forgive my nation as they know not". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Ibn Hibban* and *Baihaqi* on the authority of Sahl bin Sa'ad [May God be pleased with him])

It is due to such magnificent morals, manners, inner character and disposition, Qur'an praised Prophet Muhammad [Peace and blessings of God be upon him] as follows:



"No doubt, you are at the greatness of excellent morals, manners, inner character and disposition".

Yusuf bin Asbat (May God have mercy upon him) [a great saint and Gnostic] said: "There are ten signs of good morals, manners, inner character and disposition: oppose [others] infrequently, employ beauty of justice [in dealings with people], not to take revenge, abhor evil things, accepting apologies and excuses, censuring the self, keeping an eye on one's own faults as opposed to that of others, treating everyone young or old with warmth and affection, and having a soft and gentle conversation with everyone low or high [in social spectrum]". Someone asked Sahl al-Tustari (May God have mercy upon him) [a great saint and Gnostic]: "What is [that is referred to as] beautiful morals, manners, inner character and disposition?" He replied: "Its lowest

degree is not to take revenge and bear pain caused by others with patience, having mercy on the oppressor and asking [God] for His forgiveness". It is learnt from such events [and sayings] that the selves of these saintly people arrived at the level of moderation through incessant spiritual rigors, and became purified from traits like deception, dishonesty, enmity and jealousy, and they were contented and grateful for God's [ordained] destiny under all circumstances. The arrival of one's self at this degree is the supreme standard of the beautiful morals, manners, inner character, and disposition. The height of bad morals, manners, inner character and disposition is that one is angry with God's decree and decision and is fighting against the Divinely ordained destiny (i.e., one should strive to change the bad situation one is in with patience and continuous striving while being patient and grateful with God's Will without harboring any impatience and complaint against the Divine decree). Nevertheless, these are some signs of beautiful morals, manners, inner character, and disposition. A person whose inner being is devoid of these signs should not be deluded into believing that one possesses good morals, manners, inner character, and disposition. One's self (*Nafs*) is sick and should get it cured through spiritual strivings and rigors so that one reaches the high degree of beautiful morals, manners, inner character and disposition that is possessed by the intimates of God (*Muqarrabeen*) and those wholly devoted to truth resulting in Divine Gnosis (*Siddiqeen*).

Education and Upbringing of Children and Civilizing and Beautifying their Morals, Manners, Character, Inner Disposition and Qualities

Adopting an effective method for training children is extremely important and necessary. It is because a child is God's trust in parents' hands and the child's heart is like a nice, clean, and simple mirror which, although, is devoid of any types of impressions or shapes, is capable of accepting the influence of all types of impressions and influences and it can be inclined towards anything. Therefore, if good habits are inculcated in the child and if one is instructed in knowledge, then the child after gaining such excellent nourishment (upbringing), achieves the real success of this life and of the life Hereafter. In this [success], the parents and the teachers of the child become entitled to a share in the rewards [from God for good upbringing of the child]. And if bad habits are inculcated (nurtured) in a child and [if the child is] left unhindered (unattended/free) like animals, then the child gets destroyed after becoming ill mannered. The burden of sin [of such negligence] fells on one's (child's) guardian and caretaker. God, the Exalted, has said:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ قُوٓاْ أَنفُسَكُمۡ وَأَهۡلِيكُمۡ نَارٗا

"O you who believe! Save yourselves and your families from the fire of Hell." (Qur'an, Chapter 66, Verse 6)

And when the father saves his child from the fires of this world, then as a first priority, it is incumbent (obligatory) upon him to save his child from the fire of the Hereafter

(Hellfire), and the only way of doing this is that he teaches the child manners and civilization, and educates him/her in the best of morals and protect him/her from bad companions and friends and should not let the desire for physical beautification, fine dresses, ornamentation, physical ease, and comfort-seeking settle in his/her heart, otherwise, the child after growing up, will waste one's precious life in desiring and seeking these lowly things and will get eternally destroyed by them. Instead, it's incumbent upon the father to keep a strict watch and care from a very early age [of his child].

Necessity and Importance of Permissible (Halal) Food: For upbringing of the child and to nurse, [in the absence of the mother or in cultures where a separate arrangement is made for this purpose] a woman of good character and religiosity should be appointed, who eats lawful (*Halal*) food because the milk that comes from unlawful food, has no betterment or blessing in it, instead, if the child is brought up with milk that comes from unlawful (*Haram*) sources, then evil gets permeated into the very fiber (consciousness/psychology/inner being) of the child, and because of that, the temperament of the child gets inclined towards Satanic (evil) deeds. And when [the parent feels that] the child is able to discern between the good and the bad then a complete upbringing of the child should begin. This [phase of child's life] is indicated by the appearance of the initial signs of shyness (*Haya*/modesty), because when the child, realizing one's own respect and honor, starts to feel shy and because of shyness starts to leave doing certain things, then this is only the result of the light of intelligence emerging in one. This [emergence of the light of intelligence] happens to such an extent that one starts to think of some things as good and of some things as bad, and starts to feel shameful about certain deeds and this very realization of shyness (*Haya*) is a huge favor on the child by God, the Exalted. And it's a clear sign that argues for (clearly shows) his/her moderation of the moral values and the purity of the heart. Instead, we should think of it in this way that this consciousness of the realization of good and bad [in the child], is a glad tiding from the nature (i.e., God) that this child upon attaining puberty, will possess perfect intelligence. That's why, a child with shyness (*Haya*/modesty), should never be left free (liberated), but instead, making use of one's shyness (*Haya*) and discernment [between good and bad], a full training should be provided.

An Explanation of the Etiquettes of Eating: The first bad desire that dominates a child, is the greed to eat more; therefore, it's extremely necessary to teach one the etiquettes of eating. For example, [the etiquettes are] to eat food only with the right hand, to recite "*Bismillah*" ("I begin in the Name of God") in the beginning, to eat from the front [of the plate], to wait for others to begin before he/she does, to not start staring at the food [when others start first], to not even stare at others who are eating, to not eat in an unnecessary hurry, to chew the food properly, to not continuously [or hurriedly] put morsels of food in one's mouth [but should do that gradually], to not soil one's hand and clothes with the food [by dropping it]. Sometimes, the child should be fed only the bread so that one does not consider the curry [to go with bread] to be a necessity so as to not even be able to do without it. Likewise, one (parent or guardian) should narrate in front

of the child, the undesirability of eating too much. The child should be told to not follow the kids who eat too much, and the kids who eat less and are well trained should be praised in front of the child. The child's attention should be drawn towards sacrificing the food for the sake of others [who are less fortunate] by taking care of the needs of one's friends [who may be more in need of basic necessities of life]. The habit should be developed in the child to not care too much about [fine] food and to be contented with simple food.

An Explanation of the Etiquettes of Dressing: Similarly, instead of colorful and silk clothes, the love and desire for simple and plain clothes should be developed in the heart of the child. It should be firmly impressed on one's mind that to wear such clothes is not appropriate and pious people abhor such ways of dressing. Such things (admonitions) should be told to the child from time to time in a generalized way. And it's an obligation on the parents that when they see any child wearing silky or brightly colored dresses in front of them, then they should express their disapproval [of such ways of dressing] in front of the child and should instill their undesirability [for such dresses] in the heart of the child. The parents should protect their child from meeting with all those children who are accustomed to prosperity, seeking comforts (comfortable lifestyle), and dressing proudly. They (parents) should also protect the child from the company of all those people who tell the child stories about such ways of indulgence [like seeking comforts, dressing proudly, etc.]. Any child, who is left unattended [in such things] during one's initial growth (upbringing), after growing up commonly becomes ill-mannered, liar, thief, tale-bearer, intransigent (stubborn), evil talker, sarcastic, cunning, deceiver, and foolish. The only source of protecting the child from all these evils is good education and training, after that, the child should be admitted into a school so that one studies Qur'an and *Hadith* (traditions of Prophet Muhammad [Peace and blessing of God be upon him]), acquires knowledge of the conditions, biography, and traditions of God's righteous slaves so that from the early childhood, the love of the saints (May God have mercy upon all of them) gets established in one's heart. Furthermore, protect the child from romantic poetry and romance-oriented poets and also make one stay away from those writers who think that such poetry is a sign of the life of the heart and subtlety of perception [or expression], because such things sow the seeds of corruption (*Fasad*) and evil in the minds of children.

Method of Persuading Good and Admonishing against Evil: Whenever the child displays a good quality or displays a praiseworthy action, then father should praise the child and give one such a gift that will make the child happy and should praise the child in front of others. If the child then does something opposite [to one's praiseworthy quality or action], then it's appropriate to show unawareness of it and [the father] should not insult or humiliate the child nor should he highlight the fault. Instead, the father [or parent] should not even let the child know that he even thinks that the child has the courage to do such a thing in front of him, especially, in the case, when the child oneself tries to cover and hide the fault. It is because revealing the mistakes [of the child] at times, is the cause for the child to become more daring to such an extent that slowly and gradually the child does not even care about his/her faults being revealed. Even

after taking such a wise precaution, if the child does the same [bad] thing again, then it's suitable to rebuke one in private and the fault of the bad deed should be revealed to him/her and should be told, "Beware! Do not ever do this bad thing again. God forbid, if this is found by someone, then you will get humiliated in front of the people", [etc. etc. and other statements can be deduced from this].

Harms of Excessive Scolding: But it should be kept in mind that the child is not rebuked excessively, because it creates a habit in the child to listen to condemnation and scolding and increases in one the courage to commit wrongs. And slowly and gradually, the value of admonitions diminishes from the heart of the child. Similarly, it's necessary for the father that when he talks to the child, he maintains his awe and reverence [in the heart of the child] and should rarely rebuke one and the mother should make him/her fear the father when the child is being stubborn and should strictly stop the child from doing bad things.

Etiquettes of Sleeping: The child should be told not to sleep during the day because it creates laziness, but one should not be stopped from sleeping at night. However, the child should still be stopped from sleeping on a soft bed so that the child's bodily organs will get strong and the body will not get disfigured, due to which the child will not be able to live without comforts. Instead, the habits of sleeping on hard beds, wearing simple clothes, eating simple food should be instilled in the child. The child should be stopped from doing things in a clandestine way because one knows that it's bad, that's why the child hides it. If it's ignored, then the child will develop the habit of doing bad things.

Similarly, the habit of walking during the day and exercising should be instilled in the child so that one does not become lethargic and lazy. However, utmost care must be taken to ensure that the child does not expose one's head, knees, thighs, etc. Furthermore, the child should not walk too fast nor should keep one's hands loose [which is a sign of laziness] but instead, the child should keep one's hands close to the body and should be active.

Prohibition of Arrogance and Pride: The child should be prohibited from showing pride on anything from the possessions of his/her parents, food items, clothes, even from something like one's writing tablet and ink. Instead, the habit of dealing with all of one's fellow kids with humility, respect, honor, and having pure (clean/civilized) conversation, should be inculcated in one and should not be allowed to take anything from other children. If it's a child of wealthy parents then one should be explained that the honor and rank is in giving and not in taking, instead, taking [from others] has in it [the characteristics of] lowliness, humiliation, and degradation. If it's a child of poor parents then one should be taught that to have greed and to take something from others is a cause of one's own insult and humiliation and it's the characteristic of a dog that it keeps wagging its tail waiting and being greedy for a morsel [of food]. Similarly, the child should be made to dislike gold and silver and should be made to fear the love of

these things worse than the love of snakes and scorpions. It's because the love and greed of gold and silver, causes far more damage to children and adults than the harms caused by poison [from snakes and scorpions].

Etiquettes of Getting Together with People and Having Conversations: The child should be taught to not spit publicly, to not pick nose, to not yawn in front of anyone, to not turn one's back to anyone, to not sit cross-legged, to not sit while putting one's palm under the chin or while supporting the head with hands because all these are indications of lethargy and laziness, in other words, the child should even be taught the proper manners of sitting. The child should be restrained from talking too much and it should be clearly impressed on one's mind that all these are shameful things and are not the works of well-mannered children. Furthermore, the child should be completely prohibited from swearing either truthfully or falsely so that one will not develop the habit of swearing from childhood. Similarly, the child should be stopped from starting a conversation first and should have this habit instilled in one that one should speak only to answer [questions] and that too should be proportionate to the question [asked]. When someone is speaking to the child then one should listen very attentively and should get up to create more space for those who are older and then should sit with proper manners in front of them. The child should be stopped from useless talk, dirty talk, cursing, accusations, verbal abuse and should be prohibited from meeting people who do these things because the evil qualities of fellow children, necessarily influence the child [in a bad way]. And the real secret of [proper] training of children is embedded in protecting the children from [the company of] bad companions.

Patience and Forbearance: It is also necessary that when the teacher disciplines the child, then the child should neither scream nor shout nor seek the support of someone, instead, [the child] should exercise patience and forbearance. In order to make the child understand this, one should be told that to exercise patience is the way (characteristic) of the brave ones and to scream, shout, and cry are the works of those who lack dignity.

Importance and Benefits of Physical Exercises: After finishing his/her studies, the child should be permitted to play some good sport, with the help of which, one could get rid of the tiredness from the school and to get relaxed. But the child should not be allowed to play so much so that one gets tired due to the play [itself]. Because, to completely stop the child from playing and to just keep one under the pressure of studies, makes one's heart dead, makes one's intelligence nullified and useless, and makes one's life miserable, due to that, the child starts to look for excuses to get rid of the studies.

Etiquettes of Respecting Elders: It is extremely important that the child should be taught obedience to the parents, teachers and everyone who is older in age than oneself whether this person is a relative or not. And one should be told to look at them

with the eyes of respect and should abandon play in front of them. When the child reaches puberty, then he/she should not be allowed to have laziness in cleanliness (personal hygiene) and purity and should not be ignored for missing prayers. In certain days of *Ramadan* (month of fasting), the child [before acquiring puberty] should be made to fast in some days and should be kept away from silk and wearing gold and silver. As needed, child should be explained the Divine limits (boundaries) and Divine laws and should be made to fear theft, unlawful earnings and food, breach of trust, dishonesty, shamelessness, and all evil things that are born in the temperament (personality) of the child during adolescence. When a child's upbringing from the [early] childhood will be like this, by the time child reaches puberty, he/she will be able to clearly understand the secrets and the wisdom behind these matters. During this stage [of childhood or adolescence], one should be explained that whatever permissible (*Halal*) food is there, it is also like medicines and the only purpose of them is that the human beings, after eating them, could be obedient to God, the Exalted.

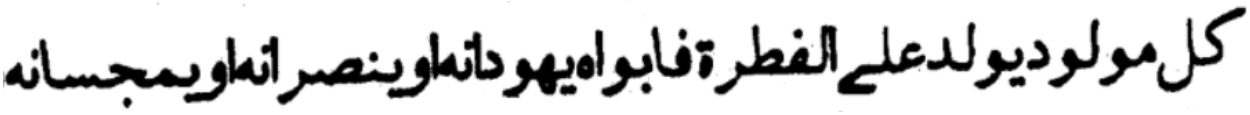
Impermanence of the World: It should also be clearly impressed upon the mind [of the child] that the world itself is not the purpose [of our lives], and [the world] is unreal, without permanence, and has an ending. Death puts an end to these [material] blessings and the world is only a place we are passing through [towards an eternal life]. It is not a place of satisfaction and [is not] a place to settle down. But the world of the Hereafter is the real station of peace and tranquility and a place of stillness and satisfaction and the death, at all times, is lying in ambush, to end the worldly life.

Who is Intelligent? In reality, intelligent is the one who provides the capital of reliance (provision needed for one's journey to the Hereafter) and good deeds from this mortal world for the eternal life of the Hereafter, so that one attains a high rank of acceptance before God, the Exalted, and the limitless blessings of the Paradise. If the child's initial upbringing had been good, then during adolescence, this discussion will prove to be pleasing to the self (*Nafs*) and effective, and will get inscribed on the heart like an [indelible] inscription on the stone thus auguring well for the child.

On contrary to that, if the child's mental (intellectual) development had been along the wrong lines, then the qualities of evil, shamelessness, desire for eating too much, greed for fine dresses, ostentation and ornamentation, gaudiness, arrogance and pride, would have been born in one, and one's heart will refuse to accept this fact (i.e., the impermanence of the worldly life and the need to work for the life of the Hereafter) like the dry wall refuses to accept dry soil (i.e., such teachings will not stick to the heart of the child). In summary, these are the initial matters that need to be taken care of to the utmost.

Child's Nature and Parents' Obligation: Since the composition of the child's heart is such that it can accept the influences of both the good and the bad, the righteous and the evil, it's the responsibility of the father and the mother to incline the [heart of the]

child either to good or to evil (Ghazali is not giving a choice in this matter, but instead, urging parents to incline the child towards good, otherwise, the child will automatically get inclined towards evil due to parents' negligence). Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:


كل مولود يولد على الفطرة فابواه يهودانه او ينصرانه او يمجسانه

"Every child is born on true innate nature [on which God has created the entire humankind, such that one is born in a state of being already predisposed to faith in God, dedication to truth and righteousness, everything that is good and positive, peace and harmony with all, and a yearning to reach one's heavenly origin through a state of Gnosis leading to inner illumination and dawning of eternal truths] but one's parents convert one into Jewish, Christian or Magian (alluding to variegated religious and ideological traditions that exist in the world, thus molding one into the mold of their own religious, ideological, cultural, geographical and intellectual context)". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of prophetic companion Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him])

A Historical Evidence of Achieving Best Results due to Good Upbringing:
Shaykh Sahl bin Abdullah Tustari (May God have mercy upon him) said: "When I was three years old, I used to get up at night to see the spirituality of the *Tahajjud* prayers (done in the last part of the night which is highly recommended for spiritual advancement on the Path of God) of my maternal uncle Muhammad bin Sawar (May God have mercy upon him). Once he said to me, 'Do you not engage in the remembrance of God, the Exalted, Who created you?' I asked, 'How should I remember God?' He said, 'At night, when you change your sides [on bed before sleeping], recite the following only in your heart, three times without moving your tongue:

Allahu Ma'iya, Allahu Nazirun Ilaeyya, Allahu Shahidi

God is with me, God is watching me, God is in front of me.'

I did that for a few nights, and then I informed him about it to which he said, 'Now on every night, do the same thing seven times.' I did that and informed him about that to which he said, 'Now do this eleven times'. I did the same and as a result of that, I started to feel its taste and sweetness in my heart. When one year passed by acting on this [every night], he said, 'The remembrance that I have taught you, you should remember it well, and keep acting on that until you die. This will be a source of benefit to you in this world and in the next'. I kept doing it for a couple of years, until I started to feel its taste (deep impact) in the deepest recesses of my innermost being. Then one day, he said, 'O Sahl! God, when He is with someone, whom He watches [every single moment], whom He is in front of, could that person ever disobey God, the Exalted? Beware! Never [ever] transgress against God and disobey Him!' Therefore, I started to

live in seclusion. Then he tried to send me to a school, but I said, 'I feel the danger that my attention [towards God] will get divided. But it will be better, if you could get this commitment from the teacher that I will study with him for a while then I will quickly return to engage in God's remembrance.'

Then afterwards, I went to the teacher and by the time I was six or seven years old, I memorized the entire Qur'an by heart. I always fasted and until I was twelve, the barley bread was my primary food (diet). During this time, when I was thirteen, I had this need to learn (find out) about a particular religious matter, and then I requested my family to allow me to go to Busra [in Iraq] so that I can ask the scholars there about this matter. Therefore, I came to Busra and asked scholars there about this matter but none of them satisfied me. Afterwards, I went to 'Abadan to be in the presence of Shaykh Habeeb Humza bin 'Abdullah 'Abadani (May God have mercy upon him) and asked him about the same religious matter to which he gave me a satisfactory response. Then I continued to stay in his presence for a long time to gain spiritual benefits (*Fayd*) from his [book] '*Mulfoozat al-Qudsiya*' and continued to learn [spiritual] manners from him. Then I returned to [my hometown of] Tustar and apportioned my diet so that one *Dirham*'s (an old currency) worth of barley used to be grounded for me and bread used to be prepared for me from it. Every night, at the time of *Suhoor* (pre-dawn meal before starting the fast), I used to eat one *Aoqia* (an old unit of measure equivalent to one ounce today) from the bread without using any curry with it. Therefore, one *Dirham* [which is a very small amount] used to be sufficient for me for [the food for] the whole year.

I made progress [in this matter] to such an extent that I used to break my fasts after three nights (in other words, he used to fast continuously for three days and nights), then after five nights, then after seven nights, then I gradually reached up to twenty-five nights. I continued in this way for twenty years continuously. Then I toured the world for many years and returned to Tustar. I used to worship and pray almost all night."

Imam Ahmad (May God have mercy upon him) said, "I never received any evidence that he (i.e., Shaykh Sahl Tustari [May God have mercy upon him]) ever used curry [with his bread when he ate]." [Ghazali (May God have mercy upon him) did not mention this tradition so that we also raise our children like this in terms of the intense spiritual exercises and extraordinary feats of physical endurance that Shaykh Sahl (May God have mercy upon him) performed from his early childhood. Ghazali's purpose in mentioning this is to drive home the point that if proper arrangements are made by parents for child's proper upbringing, then the child can reach the pinnacle of human potential, otherwise, such intense spiritual and physical exercises and rigors are not necessary and required for all].

Details about Conditions for Embarking on the Spiritual Journey, Beginning of Spiritual Struggle, and Gradual Evolution of the Spiritual Seeker on the Spiritual Path

It should be known that one who observes the Hereafter with certitude through the heart, becomes of the Hereafter, struggles for it, accumulates reliance for it, walks on the path leading to it and no importance remains in one's heart for the worldly pleasures and blessings. If someone has a pearl and one's glance fell on a precious jewel, the pearl leaves the heart and one desires to obtain the jewel in place of the pearl. One who is neither desirous of the Hereafter nor of the meeting with God, is like the one who terms a small pearl superior to the precious jewel due to lack of faith in God and the Last Day. This foolishness can only be done by the one whose sight is merely on the jewel and not on the reality of the jewel. Such a person will obviously think of a small pearl as priceless and will not see any importance of the jewel. Nevertheless, it is not possible to reach God without spiritual struggle and traversing the spiritual path (*Suluk*) which in turn is not possible without intention. The greatest obstacle in the way of intention is being devoid of faith. Faith is absent in the One who is remembered (God). Spiritual guides and [rightly-guided religious] scholars should show the way of the truth and tell fellow human beings that this world is of small value, it has no permanence, and the life of the Hereafter is surely important, only it possesses permanence, perpetuity and eternity, and [that the] people are indulged in heedlessness [of true purpose and meaning of their lives and the path to attain it], submerged in lusts and desires, oblivious to their real benefit and harm and fully intoxicated in a state of dreaming. Such learned scholars are not found who can wake them up from their slumber, distance them from their lusts and desires, and forewarn them of their negligence and heedlessness [of true purpose, meaning of life and path to eternal bliss and endless success].

If one happens to wake up from one's slumber of heedlessness then such a one does not find a way out of the darkness of unbelief and hypocrisy and stumbles and falls in every juncture and place [in one's life] due to one's ignorance [of the knowledge of one's own well-being and true success]. If such a one asks scholars about the path [out of the darkness surrounding one, into a life of true inner illumination and peace] then they are not able to answer one because they themselves are slaves of base desires and lusts and are prisoners of desires from the lower self (*Nafs*). Weakness of intention, unfamiliarity with the path, and misguidance of the [so called] scholars are those causes due to which the path to God is devoid of wayfarers, spiritual travelers, and strivers. When objective [and meaning of one's life and the path to attain it] is hidden from the sight, the guide to lead towards one's [true] objective [and purpose of life] vanished, [inner] self is dominated with stubborn wrong-headed follies (*Hawa*) and lusts, and seeker [of truth, guidance and inner illumination] is indulged in heedlessness then how can one find the way? If it is found [by any chance] and one took [a] step towards it

then how would one reach the destination when one does not even know how to tread the path?

Conditions for Embarking on the Spiritual Journey: If one is intelligent and on one's own or upon someone's persuasion, makes an intention for the Hereafter, then even before taking a step [towards it], one should find out the conditions for embarking on the spiritual journey. Before embarking on the spiritual journey, fulfilling following conditions is necessary:

First and foremost, condition for embarking on the spiritual journey is that one removes whatever veils (things that hide and obfuscate) one finds between oneself and truth. People are deprived of experiencing the truth due to many veils entrenched in between [themselves and truth]. God says:

وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ سَدًّا وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ سَدًّا فَأَغْشَيْنَاهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ

"And We have put a barrier in front of them, a barrier behind them and with that, We have surrounded them from all directions, hence they cannot see [the light of truth and this has been done on account of their own heedlessness towards seeking the truth and their own wrong actions]." (Qur'an, Chapter 36, Verse 9)

Types of Veils: In between the spiritual seeker and truth are four veils (obstacles hindering the truth and obfuscating the right path in life that leads to achievement of true purpose of life, inner illumination, eternal happiness and endless success): wealth, [desire for] fame, blind following [of various ideologies], and sins. The veil of wealth dissipates when it goes out of the possession of the seeker [of spiritual path] and remains only to the extent of one's needs. Even if a *Dirham* (an old currency) remains with the seeker that is beyond one's needs, one's heart will remain attentive to it, the *Dirham* will rule the heart and it will not be able to incline towards God. The veil of fame is lifted when the seeker stays away from places of fame and authority, makes humility and humbleness as one's habit, prefer the life of anonymity, remains unattached to the causes of fame, and does the type of actions [within the limits of the Divine law and decency] that arise revulsion in people against one. The veil of blind following is removed by setting aside prejudiced mentality against different schools of thoughts of Divine law and argumentation [similarly against different religious traditions] and only ascertain that there is no god but God and Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) is the messenger of God. It is necessary for practical manifestation of the truth and veracity of these words to cut off all relations from everything and every being considered worthy of worship other than God, especially [cutting off all relations] with the god of [one's own] self (*Nafs* or ego) as this "god" is accorded great importance and every command of it is obeyed and every gesture of it is submitted to by bowing one's head to it. If this statement of unity and oneness of God is attested to like that then all

beliefs emanating out of blind following [of various ideologies] will be nullified. This is achieved through spiritual struggle and striving (*Mujahada*) and not through argumentations and debates [with people]. If prejudice and intolerance is dominating one and [consequently] is not willing to listen to anything against one's [long held and cherished] beliefs then it is the stranglehold of blind following and it is very difficult to get out of this stranglehold. It is not a condition of being a seeker that one is a strict adherent of a certain school of thought [of Divine law] but instead, an admirer and adherent of any school of thought can traverse the path of embarking on the spiritual journey. The veil of sin is not removed until one repents [to God from all of one's own wrongdoings], expresses regret and remorse on all past sins and returns the rights of everyone one has oppressed [by usurping their rights]. One who desires to be informed of the secrets and inner wisdom of the path to God (*Deen*) through spiritual illuminations and unveilings (*Mukashafa*) without repenting from one's sins, is like the one who wants to understand the meanings and intent of Qur'an without learning Arabic while Qur'an is in Arabic [language]. The meaning of even a single verse of Qur'an cannot be understood without learning Arabic, and understanding its secrets, subtleties, and wisdom is even more difficult because of that. Similarly, before stepping in the valley of spiritual striving, it is imperative to adhere to the teachings of the Divine law [to conduct one's outward life through acts of Divine worship and social dealings with all fellow human beings]. Complete adherence of the Divine law to conduct the outward life, leads to the opening of the doors of Divine secrets and fountains of eternal truths gush forth.

Need for a Perfected Spiritual Guide: The adherent of all of these four conditions and avoider of the desires of wealth and fame is like the one who gets cleaned after being soiled with filth and after performing ablution (*Wudu* - an act of physical purification that is a necessary condition for performing prayers) becomes eligible to perform prayers. However, this eligibility is not enough to perform prayers. Instead, at times one needs a leader of congregation (*Imam*) in whose leadership, prayers can be performed. Similarly, it is not enough to fulfill and act upon these four conditions but there is also a need for a teacher or spiritual guide (*Skaykh*) who can guide and make one tread the straight path of guidance [that does not have any crookedness, deviations and pitfalls]. The path to God (*Deen*) is extremely complex and difficult and is surrounded on all sides by a plethora of satanic (evil) paths [leading one to self-destruction]. If no one (spiritual guide) is found, then it is possible that Satan may come forward for leadership and guidance, who tries to deviate one from the straight path of guidance into leading one on his own path. Treading dangerous paths without a [spiritual] guide is tantamount to undertaking a journey of [spiritual] death. Those people who have confidence in themselves to such an extent and start treading the path on their own are like plants growing on a pathway. Their lives can be short, and their lives can end anytime [due to taking wrong paths in life that are potentially harmful]. If they happen to survive, they will not be able to bear fruits [in the spiritual path that in turn, has ramifications for positive and beneficial actions in one's outer life].

After these four conditions are met, the matter that has the most importance is the existence of a perfected spiritual guide (*Shaykh al-Kamil*) whose being commands one's confidence like a blind person who has full confidence in one's companion and whom one follows without caring about the pitfalls of the way. This should be the state of the spiritual seeker (*Mureed*) who hands oneself over to the spiritual guide and does what the guide tells one to do [within the bounds of the Divine Law - a true spiritual guide will never go against the Divine injunctions of the scared law and will hold it in highest esteem] and has this certitude that even if the spiritual guide makes a mistake, it will not harm one and it will turn out to be beneficial for one. The mistake of the spiritual guide is better than treading the spiritual path alone [without a spiritual guide using one's own conjectures and thoughts as the guide] and taking chances with selecting the correct [spiritual] path [as having a perfected spiritual guide prevents one from taking one step forward with multiple steps backwards in the spiritual path].

Duties of the Spiritual Guide: When a spiritual seeker makes someone one's guide and leader [in the spiritual path] then it is obligated for the guide to provide [the spiritual seeker] with a safe sanctuary [in terms of effective spiritual teachings, guidance and help] and make arrangements for spiritual seeker's protection in such a strong fortress where the steps of highway robbers and brigands do not reach. Such a safe sanctuary and fortress has four surrounding walls: solitude, stillness, hunger and wakefulness [as opposed to being in the company of people, in the state of constant haste and motion, satiated and filled up, and asleep for long hours as these are major impediments of the spiritual path]. The purpose of the spiritual seeker is the reformation of the heart [also known as refinement and purification of the soul, so it becomes capable of breaking the shackles that hold it down and make it rise into the higher realms of existence, into limpidity from turbidity, into eternal happiness and endless triumph from the stress of the mundane and perceived failures in the material realm] so that the Divine vision [with the eye of the soul] becomes possible and one attains to Divine nearness. Above mentioned four things are necessary to attain this objective. Hunger reduces the flow of blood into the heart that in turn adds clarity to it and this clarity is the light of the heart. Hunger reduces hardness in the heart and humility, compassion and softness are born in it that in turn is the key to spiritual unveiling (*Mukashafa*), while hardness is a veil towards it. Reduced flow of blood narrows down the passageways of the [real] enemy [of human race, i.e., Satan] because veins laden with lusts and desires are its passageways and through blood in these veins, it circulates in the whole body. Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said to his companions: "Keep your hearts hungry, perhaps you will be able to have a vision of your Lord". Sahl bin Abdullah Tustari (May God have mercy upon him said) said: "*Abdal* (one of the highest categories of saints and Gnostics) are made by four things: hunger, wakefulness, silence and solitude". The impact of hunger on enlightenment and illumination of the heart is an undeniable fact. Experience attests to that. Details will be provided in the chapter "Breaking the Two Desires" (Chapter 3).

Wakefulness also results in limpidity, brilliance, and illumination in the heart. When this light adds on to the light created by hunger [to make it light upon light], the heart becomes like a bright star or a polished mirror that reflects the Divine beauty and in it the witnessing of lofty degrees of the Hereafter, and insignificance, humiliations and pitfalls of worldly existence, happens. After this witnessing, there is no importance left of worldliness in the eyes of the spiritual seeker and one becomes fully focused on the Hereafter [which is the final destination of permanence and eternity in the journey of human soul as it forges along from one level of existence to another]. Sleep [in excessiveness] makes the heart hard and dead but if it's according to the need then the secrets of the hidden realm are revealed in it. It is written in the qualities of the *Abdal* (saints and Gnostics of very high spiritual caliber) that their nourishment is hunger, they sleep only when needed the most, and talk only in accordance with the need that helps remove the tiredness one gets from Divine remembrance and contemplation. Stillness and silence strengthen the heart and leads to scrupulousness (*Wara'*) and God-fear (*Taqwa*).

Full benefit of solitude is achieved when eyes and ears, that are the doors of the heart, are closed and nothing interferes in the engagement of the heart [in Divine remembrance and contemplation]. The similitude of the heart in the body is like a water reservoir in which dirty water from all sides fell into it. The purpose of spiritual struggle and striving is to close all the channels that transport filthy water [into the water reservoir, i.e., the heart] and dig the water reservoir deep so that it does not have the need for any external source [for water], instead, the water itself springs forth from the bottom of the reservoir. To make the reservoir self-sufficient in water, it is necessary to completely empty out the reservoir of dirty water and this can only happen when all channels leading to the reservoir are closed. If one wants to keep the channels open [for flow of dirty water into the reservoir] and have pure and fresh water stored in the reservoir then that is quite impossible. The channels of the heart [that lead impurities and filth into it] are senses. The way of stopping senses is to adopt solitude in a dark house and if a dark room is not available then one should sit there with cloth on one's head. One listens to the voice of truth in solitude and witnesses the majesty of the Divine Providence. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) was reached and addressed by this voice of truth in this very state [of solitude and spiritual contemplation before the start of his prophethood]. The upshot of this explanation is that these four qualities of hunger, wakefulness, stillness, and solitude are refuges of a spiritual traveler. One can protect oneself from dacoits and robbers of the [spiritual] path [leading to God] through these [four] means.

Beginning of Striving in the Spiritual Path (*Suluk*): After fulfilling all these conditions, one should step into the path of striving in the spiritual path (*Suluk*) and be cognizant that there are many difficult canyons (or gorges) in the path that must be crossed in order to forge ahead. The canyons of the path to God are none other than

the [negative and evil inner] qualities of the heart that instill worldly desires. Some of these canyons are huge that are difficult to cross and some are small that are easy to traverse. The [correct] sequence for traversing these canyons is to traverse an easy canyon, then one that is slightly difficult than the first one, then a more difficult one [and so on]. These qualities are the secrets and indications of the same barriers that was crossed in the beginning of the spiritual struggle such as inclination towards wealth, fame, creations [of God as opposed to the Creator Himself], and sins. Just as the indications of these barriers were cut off from the outer being [of oneself], similarly they should be eradicated from the inner being [of oneself]. But this requires a long spiritual struggle. I have written this before that the real spiritual struggle is the opposition of the desires and lusts [of the lower self].

When the heart of the spiritual traveler is emptied out of desires and lusts and nothing is left in the heart that opposes spiritual endeavors then the spiritual guide, (*Murshid* or *Shaykh*) should keep a continuous watch of the heart of the spiritual traveler [who happens to be the guide of student or *Mureed*] and prevent one from excessive outer devotions or litanies (*Awrad*). Instead, one should be admonished to be contented with [acts of religious] obligations (*Fara'id*) and Prophetic acts (*Sunan*) [that are below the level of religious obligations and are considered as emulating the pious deeds and devotions of the Prophet that are above and beyond the obligatory acts of worship]. At the most, spiritual guide should tell one the remembrance that is the summarization of all remembrances and litanies, i.e., when heart becomes empty of everything other than God, one should have the spiritual traveler do the remembrance of the Supreme Name "Allah" (i.e., God's one and only personal name, whereas, "God" is a generic language specific way of referring to the Supreme Being who is the master, creator, sustainer and provider of everything that He brought into existence). However, one should not be made to do this remembrance as long as the heart is inclined towards other impediments of the spiritual path (*'Ala'iq*). That's why, Shibli (May God have mercy upon him) used to tell a student of his: "If something occurs in your heart that is other than God in between this Friday and the next, then don't come and visit me next Friday". This type of scrupulousness is not achieved without the domination of true intention to traverse the spiritual path and to attain Divine love. Heart is [truly] devoid of other than God, when not even a thought occurs in the heart that is of other than God, and one becomes such a true lover that other than the one contemplation, no other contemplations remain. If a spiritual traveler attains to such an inner state, spiritual guide should allow such a one to sit in a corner in solitude and appoint someone to bring permissible (*Halal*) food. It is imperative for food to be permissible because the basis of the path to God (*Deen*) is eating permissible food [as opposed to impermissible food such as the one acquired through illegal and unethical means, such as bribe, extortion, theft, fraud, etc., or through illegally earned money or of type that is forbidden in the Sacred Law].

After giving one permission for solitude, a spiritual guide should tell one to do a Divine remembrance (*Dhikr*) in which one's heart and tongue both remain fully indulged, such

as, "*Allah, Allah*" ("*Allah*" is God's one and only personal Name), "*SubhanAllah*" (Glory be to God Who is above all imperfections, shortcomings, errors and everything deficient, vile and negative), etc. One should exercise perseverance in this remembrance to such an extent that the movement of the tongue stops, and it would seem that it has continued on the tongue without any intentional movement. This litany should continue to such an extent that any remaining influence of the tongue [on this Divine remembrance] ceases to exist and only the form of the word [of the Supreme Name] remains in the heart. A stage will then come [through ceaseless striving in this spiritual endeavor] where even the form of the word erases from the heart and only the reality of its meaning remains. This happens in such a way that the meaning stays with the heart at all times and never disappears, and in its presence, not even the thought of any other meaning occurs in the heart.

When heart is indulged in something, no matter what it is, no room is left in it for anything other than that. Therefore, if heart is busy in God's remembrance and He is One who is being sought as well as one's objective, then heart will become devoid of all else other than God. After arriving at this stage, a spiritual traveler (*Salik* or *Mureed*) should keep a strict watch over one's heart and should strive to not even allow the imagination of anything else in the heart - neither related to one's own being nor related to anyone [or anything] else. This is because if the heart is inclined towards any side, it will become devoid of Divine remembrance, even though it happens for a moment, it is [nevertheless] a great loss. This type of loss should be avoided. The state of the heart regarding insinuations is that if one gets rid of external insinuations and focusses the heart on one utterance [of Divine remembrance] then that will also become a source of insinuations like, "What is this utterance?", "What does it mean?", "Why is it [God's] worship?" This insinuation will open up the doors or worries and Satan will enter [into the heart] with newly devised insinuations. They will include insinuations that will take one from the safety of faith to the destruction of disbelief, from the light of Prophetic way (*Sunnah*) to the darkness of newly contrived matters and innovations in faith (*Bid'a*, i.e., matters that are detrimental to one's faith as they are deviations from the pure, original and truthful teachings of the faith). If spiritual traveler is active [in guarding against such encroachments to one's faith] and keeps a strict watch on paths that bring in such insinuations, then there is no danger of any harm.

Two Types of Insinuations: Insinuations that a spiritual traveler comes across, are of two types. Some insinuations are those for which it can be said with certainty that God is completely free of them [as they are not compatible with Divine Majesty and Beauty] but Satan still tries to instill them into the heart. The way to protect oneself from such machinations of Satan is to engage in Divine remembrance. God says:

"If you start to get an evil thought from Satan then seek refuge in God. Verily, He is All-hearing and All-knowing." (Qur'an, Chapter 7, Verse 200)

He furthermore said:

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ ٱتَّقَوْا۟ إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَٰٓئِفٌ مِّنَ ٱلشَّيْطَٰنِ تَذَكَّرُوا۟ فَإِذَا هُم مُّبْصِرُونَ

"Verily those who have pious awe, reverence and fear of God, when encountered with a danger from Satan (an evil, harm-inflicting, and negative thought), they immediately engage in Divine remembrance and their eyes open up all of a sudden (in a state of inner spiritual realization that also serves as a barrier and protection against all that is harmful to one)." (Qur'an, Chapter 7, Verse 201)

Second type includes such insinuations that have hesitation and doubt in them. It cannot be said about them with full confidence that God is free of them. When encountered with such insinuations, instead of making a decision oneself, spiritual traveler should inquire about the opinion of the spiritual guide. Not only that but one should share one's state of the heart with the spiritual guide whether it's lethargy or invigoration, inclination towards something or truthfulness of intention [to traverse the spiritual path], in short, every [inner] state [of the heart] should be shared with the spiritual guide so that one can prescribe a cure [for inner states of the heart that need cure]. It is also necessary to not share these with anyone else other than the spiritual guide who must also keep a deep watch over the [inner] states of the spiritual traveler (*Mureed* or one's student on the spiritual path) and make a decision [in terms of the cure of the negative and damage-inflicting inner states] according to the intelligence and foresight [of the spiritual traveler]. If spiritual guide sees that permission to have contemplation and inner reflection will cause the spiritual traveler to automatically become aware of the truth, then one should be put on that path and be told to maintain perpetuity of this [spiritual] contemplation so that the Divine illumination appears from God that reveals the realities. However, if it is perceived that the spiritual traveler will not be able to find the way oneself and truth will not be revealed automatically to one, then spiritual guide should mitigate one's doubts and inform one of the realities that one is capable of enduring, advise one and considering one's standard (mental and spiritual capacities), present some arguments. Spiritual guide should not use over-emphasis to make [spiritual] matters understood, instead, whatever needs to be said or advised should be done with kindness and ease because this path [of spiritual ascendence into the Divine Presence] is very arduous and laden with fatal dangers. Some spiritual travelers are surrounded by harmful thoughts during the spiritual activity of Divine remembrance and contemplation and consequently lose the capability of spiritual unveiling of realities. As a result of that, they start to traverse a useless path [where their time and efforts get wasted] and get closer to destruction. This is a great loss. One whose heart is free to engage in Divine remembrance and impediments to that are not present either, still at times, gets involved in similar harmful thoughts. A spiritual traveler is like a passenger of a ship beset with dangers. If one escapes, one becomes king of the [spiritual] path. If one cannot escape, one gets destroyed [in terms of losing the struggle for spiritual ascension to achieve the purpose of one's life and resulting eternal happiness and endless triumph].

After basic faith and beliefs related to outer acts of worship have been acquired through following (*Taqleed* or following of others with knowledge), one should engage in righteous acts [related to Divine worship and serving others]. There are many dangers in acting in any other way. That's why, some people have deemed it essential for the spiritual guide to use one's insights [and intuitions] to find the [inner] state of one's students (spiritual travelers). If one is not intelligent and possesses beliefs about outwards matters [related to outward acts of worship as opposed to inward spiritual matters], then instead of getting one involved into Divine remembrance, one should be involved in outer acts of worship and incessant *Awrad* (litanies) or one should be involved in serving those who have dedicated themselves in Divine remembrance and contemplation so that their blessings can also be obtained by one. While being constantly engaged in Divine remembrance, the spiritual traveler [who has risen above the level of mere outward worship and following others in outer acts] experiences good inner states and [even] extraordinary feats [like miracles] start to happen through one. These inner states and extraordinary feats cause the undeserving spiritual traveler [due to one's low spiritual caliber and being a beginner on the spiritual path] to be engaged in self-righteousness, self-conceitedness, show off and happiness [about one being superior to others in one's own mistaken estimation and opinion]. It should be remembered that these conditions and states are impediments of spiritual strivings. If spiritual traveler becomes attentive towards them and one's self becomes immersed in these states, then this will cause interruption in the spiritual path, rather it is feared that spiritual traveler will cease to forge ahead on the spiritual path. It is better that one stays like a thirsty person in all of one's life who cannot be satiated by even the water of the entire ocean [as self-satisfaction impedes and reverses spiritual advancement and perfection].

The capital of the spiritual traveler is ending one's relationship (i.e., attachment of the heart) with the creations [of God, i.e., with each and everything other than God as attachment to them leads to an eventual disappointment and disillusionment due to their impermanence and lack of real power], attachment with God (the Creator), and solitude [to make this possible as indulgence of the heart in pomp, glitter and glory of the world kills all spiritual ambitions]. One [spiritual] traveler said: "I asked an *Abdal* (a Gnostic of very high spiritual achievement) about the path of investigation. He replied: 'You live in the world as a traveler resides somewhere'. I asked him: 'Tell me the deed because of which my heart always remains with God'. He replied: 'Do not look at the creations as looking at them is a darkness [of the soul]'. I replied: 'That is necessary'. He replied: 'Don't listen to their talk as it causes hardness of the heart'. I said: 'That is also necessary'. He replied: 'Do not have any dealings with them as that causes fear'. I said: 'That is necessary as well, as I spend my life among them. How is it possible to not have any dealings with them?' He responded: 'Don't live with them. Living with them is destruction'. I replied: 'This illness is also not going to leave'. He said: 'You look at the heedless and oblivious folks, listen to the talk of ignoramus, have dealings with useless folks (people of low or no spiritual ambitions whose company is not useful

for one) and still want to have your heart remain with God? That is never going to be possible'".

Highest Level of Spiritual Struggle: The highest level of spiritual struggle is that a spiritual traveler (*Mureed*) finds one's heart present at every moment and second, with God and this level cannot be achieved until one's heart is emptied out of everything other than God and that is not possible without a long [and determined] spiritual struggle. When nothing remains in human heart except for the remembrance of God, the majesty of Divine Providence is revealed to it, the light of truth is dawned on it, and all subtleties of the higher [spiritual] realms are unveiled whose qualities cannot be explained. Nevertheless, if there is special Divine Grace on a spiritual traveler (*Mureed*) and any matter from the above-mentioned matter is revealed, one should guard such a spiritual state [as it is priceless]. After attaining to such a [high] degree of spiritual state, many highway robbers impede one's path (progress and ascension on the spiritual path). The biggest highway robber [impeding one's spiritual journey] is that one starts to narrate such [inner spiritual] states [to general public] as admonitions and advice and becomes ardently desirous of sermonizing and of public oratory [as one develops this mistaken assumption and delusional state that the final destination in spiritual path has now been reached and time has come to share one's inner spiritual achievements in the form of high inner states with the general public. This is often done with the thought to help them out but in reality, the lower self (*Nafs*) is seeking comfort, fame, prestige, honor and consequent exultation and material benefits [inimical to one's spirituality].

This hobby provides indescribable pleasure to the lower self (*Nafs*). This [in reality] is not pleasure, it is intoxication. Human being is completely absorbed in this pastime in a state of utter obliviousness to one's benefit and harm. Not only that, in order to make sermons more effective and acceptable, one gets indulged in selection of [nice and impressive] words, [art of] colorful discourse, and to satisfy the urge of displaying knowledge, one searches for stories, examples and evidences from Qur'an and *Hadith* (Prophetic narrations) and presents them to the audience. Sometimes Satan puts this in one's head: "This work of yours is great and tremendous, your speeches are giving life to dead hearts, veils of heedlessness [towards one's real purpose of life and spiritual strivings needed to attain it] are moving away. You are an intermediary between God and His servants, you are not inviting God's creations towards good for any profit or ulterior motive but merely doing this with the spirit of truthfulness and sincerity". This deception of Satan is revealed when someone else from the contemporaries of the spiritual traveler is performing the same obligation of invitation [to God] and teaching, who is also popular among the people due to oratory capabilities. If feeling of jealousy towards such a one is born in the heart of the spiritual traveler, then it should be understood that one's sermonizing is for the sake of pure pleasure and not for the betterment of people and Divine recompense and reward. If one's objective had been pious, one would not have been jealous towards one's contemporary preacher. Instead, one would have been happy that one has the support of an additional person [for the noble undertaking of inviting people towards truth, righteousness, and real

purpose of life]. It is like finding a dead body of an unknown deceased person and the responsibility of burial comes on one's shoulder. If one finds an individual who cooperates on this righteous matter, would it be a place of happiness or jealousy? Similarly, heedless, and oblivious people are [in reality] dead, even though their bodies appear to be walking and moving but they, in reality, are devoid of [living] soul. Learned scholars and inviters to [eternal] verities imbue life to dead souls. If a caller to truth gets help and companionship of another inviter, then it is a cause of comfort for one and not a cause of grief, but the worldly scholars and preachers do not deem it to be a comfort but rather construe it as interference in the boundaries of each other's territories and dominions. A spiritual traveler must avoid this as it is an entrapment of Satan through which it ambushes people who step into the valley of Divine Gnosis. People get entrapped in this trap because love of worldliness dominates human temperament. God, the Exalted, says:

بَلْ تُؤْثِرُونَ ٱلْحَيَوٰةَ ٱلدُّنْيَا

"… instead, you prefer the life of the world (i.e., the ephemeral earthly existence as opposed to the eternal life)." (Qur'an, Chapter 87, Verse 16)

God also said that evil [and negative tendencies and inclinations] dominated the [human] temperaments from before as its mention is also found in Divinely revealed books and scrolls of the previous nations. God says:

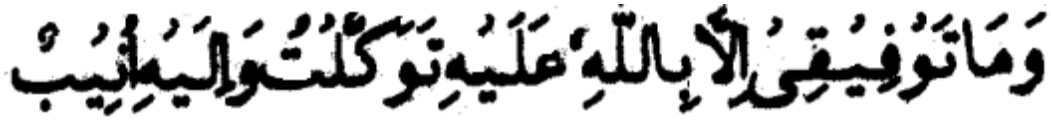
إِنَّ هَٰذَا لَفِى ٱلصُّحُفِ ٱلْأُولَىٰ ﴿١٨﴾ صُحُفِ إِبْرَٰهِيمَ وَمُوسَىٰ ﴿١٩﴾

"This is also present in the previous Divinely revealed books, in the scrolls of Abraham and Moses." (Qur'an, Chapter 87, Verses 18-19)

This is a brief sketch of the spiritual struggle, striving, and training of the spiritual traveler. Detailed steps will be provided in subsequent chapters about which [negative and harmful] inner traits should be eradicated and how [to achieve that] and which [sublime] inner traits should be adorned in the heart.

The most dominant and overpowering of all human [inner character] traits are the lusts of stomach, private parts, and tongue. After them, it is the [trait of] anger that supports them. After getting accustomed and inured to these lusts, the love of worldliness increases in the heart of human beings and the desire for wealth and fame is born. Through the womb of this desire, the germs of arrogance, self-righteousness and self-aggrandizement are born, and the human being is entrapped in them in such a way that one cannot even imagine getting liberated from them. One likes only those aspects of religion that have some means of dominion, prestige, and power in them. Considering the severity and sensitivity of the matter, we will discuss the destructive negative inner qualities that bring about destruction of one's heart and soul (*Muhlikaat*) at the end of

these two chapters. This discussion will be in the next eight books [or chapters of "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God" from the third of the four volumes of the book that correspond to the next eight chapters in this work]. First, the lust of the stomach and private parts; second, perils of the tongue; third, anger, rancor and jealousy; fourth, condemnation of worldliness and details about its deception; fifth, love of wealth, material possessions and miserliness; sixth, ostentation [related to display of self and self-centric traits] and love of fame; seventh, arrogance and self-conceitedness; and eighth: self-delusional states. Through these eight books, our purpose will be achieved that is before us from the third volume of "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God" [which is about elucidating the destructive negative inner qualities that bring about destruction of one's heart and soul so one can adopt safeguarding measures against them]. In the first of the previous two chapters (Ghazali refers to them as books), we have elucidated the inner traits and qualities or exposition of the heart, as heart is the source and residence of all destructive inner qualities (*Muhlikaat*), and of salvific, auspicious, life and success imparting inner qualities (*Munjiyaat*) [that lead one to eternal happiness and endless triumph]. Second book (or chapter which is this current one) provided methodology of civilizing and beautifying one's inner character traits and dispositions (*Ikhlaq*) and cures for complete recovery were prescribed for illnesses and diseases of the heart [or soul]. This discussion has been brief, but forthcoming chapters will have the details.



"There is no enabler of good righteous deeds except God, on Him I put my whole trust and towards Him I return unceasingly for all help and needs".

Chapter 3 - Breaking the Hold of Two Overpowering Base Desires from the Lower Self

Ghazali's third book in the third volume or quarter of his *magnum opus* "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God" deals with breaking the two overpowering desires of indulgence in food and indulgence in carnal pleasures. These two desires are over-powering because of their obsessive nature, imperiling health, and imbuing heedlessness and negligence towards one's real purpose of life, leaving little or no room for spiritual endeavors and strivings. Spiritual journey gets utterly obstructed due to indulgence in carnal pleasures and bodily pursuits leaving little room for non-self-centric positive endeavors. Uncontrolled urge for carnal pleasures, leaves little room for positive altruistic endeavors that are based on empathy for others. Instead, self-centric obsessions lead one to selfishness and to all of its debilitating ramifications that are all evident to see. In various spiritual traditions of the world, hunger has been used as a tool for spiritual undertakings, making the path easy for its travelers. Ghazali re-emphasizes the primacy of partial hunger and restraint in food as a tool to facilitate our own spiritual strivings that in turn promotes positive altruistic endeavors and empathy for the unfortunates, dispossessed, and those beset with sufferings. Once clarity of the soul and sensitivity of the heart develops through curbing of base desires, one feels the pain and suffering of others in every nerve, fiber, and atom of one's being. Sickness of others becomes one's own sickness, sorrow of others becomes one's own sorrow, problems of others become one's own problems, and pain and sufferings of others becomes one's own pain and suffering. One does not remain selfish, self-centric and hard-hearted anymore as one is driven to noble endeavors through an unabated force emanating from within. This in turn propels one's ascension in the spiritual path. This book of Ghazali entitled "Breaking the Hold of Two [Overpowering Base] Desires [from the Lower Self]" is being presented here in condensed form as follows [9]:

Know that for the children of Adam (i.e., all of humanity), the most fatal and destructive lust is the lust of the stomach. It is because of this, Adam and Eve [the father and mother respectively of the entire humankind] (Peace be upon them both) were expelled from the Heaven [from the life of comfort] and sent to this world [to start a new life laden with struggles, strivings, hard work, challenges, unpleasant situations and undesirable things like pain, sufferings, sorrows, hunger, illnesses and tragedies that are paradoxically there to help us find our way back to our real heavenly origins in the shade of the Divine Presence]. They were forbidden from eating [the fruits] from a particular tree but desire overpowered them, and they ended up eating from the [forbidden] tree. As a consequence of this disobedience [to Divine injunction], all the faults (matters of shame) that were hidden until then, got revealed.

Stomach - the Fountainhead of all Lusts, Desires and Overpowering Urges:
Reality is that the stomach is the fountainhead of all lusts and origin and source of all harms. Lust of the stomach incites lust for carnal pleasures. When one's belly is full, one thinks about indulging in excessive carnal pleasures. Excessive desires of food and copulation, engender desire for fame and material possessions (wealth). Fame and wealth are two things that are sources of increase in number of marriages and fine dining. Abundance of wealth and excessiveness in fame, creates arrogance, desire to exceed others in competition [for various material things], and feelings of jealousy against those who are superior to one [in material possessions, fame and power] and from their womb are born the evils of ostentation, boasting, pride, and their likes. Feeling of acrimony, enmity and rancor are blown up as a result of that. One then gets bent on rebellion, disobedience [to Divine guidance and injunctions], and mutiny, and gets immersed into evils and licentiousness. These are all the consequences and fruits of not keeping the stomach empty as this is all the arrogance and intoxication of eating food to one's fill. If one had kept one's self (*Nafs*) humiliated with hunger and had placed a strict guard and watch over the passageways of Satan (veins for blood circulation throughout the body), it would have never resorted to rebellion [against norms of decency, civility, common good and Divine injunctions]. Instead, one would have obeyed God and would not have tread the path of arrogance, ostentation (self-centric, egoistic display of oneself), disobedience [to Divine injunctions] and rebellion. One would not have drowned in worldly pleasures nor would have made the mistake of preferring temporal (world) over eternal (hereafter) nor would have pounced on worldly possessions and wealth like hounds pounce on their prey. Nevertheless, the harms of the lust of stomach are so dangerous and fatal, it is imperative to inform the servants of God (all human beings) about its dangers and ways to safeguard against it. Same is the situation with the sexual lust since it is subservient to the lust of the stomach. We will complete this discussion with the aid and ability granted by God in a few sections [of this chapter]. In the first section, excellence of hunger and condemnation of gluttony will be explained then the benefits [of hunger] will be mentioned. Afterwards, the method of spiritual striving to eradicate the lust of stomach through eating less and delaying meals will be elucidated. In connection with [the benefits of] hunger, the differences of states of people will be mentioned. After that, the lust of the private parts will be discussed. Later on, whether it is necessary for a spiritual traveler to marry or not will be explained. After that, the excellences of those people will be mentioned who are opposed to the lusts of stomach, private parts, and eyes.

Excellence of Hunger and Condemnation of Gluttony

Traditions [of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)] on excellence of hunger are as follows:

جاهدوا انفسكم بالجوع والعطش فان الاجر فى ذالك كاجر للمجاهد فى سبيل الله فانه ليس من عمل احب الى الله من جوع وعطش

"Do spiritual struggle and striving with your selves (*Nafs*) with hunger and thirst because it has the same Divine recompense as it is for engaging in [legitimate] self-defense [against external aggression to preserve life, liberty, property and peace] in the way of God. It is because there is no act more beloved to God than hunger and thirst."

Abdullah bin Abbas (May God be pleased with him) narrates this from Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him):

لا يدخل ملكوت السموات من ملا بطنه

"Angels of heavens do not come near a person who fills up the stomach [indicating indulgence in a state of obliviousness to one's purpose of life and striving that must be done to attain it]."

البسوا وكلوا واشربوا فى انصاف البطون فانه جزء من النبوة

"Dress up [with clothes that cover what needs to be covered], eat and drink with stomach half empty as this is a part of the prophethood."

الفكر نصف العبادة وقلة الطعام هى العبادة

"Contemplation is half the worship and eating small amount of food is full worship."

افضلكم عند الله منزلة يوم القيامة اطولكم جوعا وتفكرا فى الله سبحانه وابغضكم عند الله عز وجل يوم القيامة كل نوام اكول شروب

"On the Day of Judgment, the highest-ranking individual would be the one who used to stay hungry a lot and used to engage in abundant contemplation of God. On the Day of Judgment, that individual would be low in the eyes of God who used to sleep, eat and drink a lot."

لا تميتوا القلب بكثرة الطعام والشراب فان القلب كالزرع يموت اذا اكثر عليه الماء

"Do not make your hearts dead through abundance of food and drink. This is due to heart being like a farmland - when it is irrigated with excessive water, it gets destroyed."

ماملا ابن آدم وعاء شرا من بطنه حسب ابن آدم لقيمات يقمن صلبه وان
كان لا بد فاعلا فثلث لطعامه وثلث لشرابه وثلث لنفسه

"Son of Adam (i.e., human being) has not filled any utensil worse than stomach. A few morsels are enough for son of Adam that can keep the back straight. If it is necessary to fill, the stomach should be divided into three parts - one part (one-third of the stomach) for the food, one part for the water and one part for the breathing (i.e., one third of the stomach should be left empty for easy breathing and to avoid excessive eating and drinking in order to have positive medical ramifications for the physical health)." (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Tirmidhi* on the authority of prophetic companion Miqdam [May God be pleased with him])

In a long tradition [of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) narrated by Usama bin Zaid and Abu Hurairah (May God be pleased with them) says:

ان اقرب الناس من الله عز وجل يوم القيامة من طال جوعه وعطشه وحزنه في
الدنيا الاخفياء الاتقياء الذين ان شهدوا لم يعرفوا وان غابوا لم يفتقدوا تعرفهم
بقاع الارض وتحف بهم ملائكة السماء نعم الناس بالدنيا ونعموا بطاعة الله
عز وجل افترش الناس الفرش الوثيرة وافترشوا الجباه والركب ضيع
الناس فعل النبيين واخلاقهم وحفظوها هم تبكى الارض اذا فقدتهم
ويسخط الجبار على كل بلدة ليس فيها منهم احد لم يتكالبوا على الدنيا
تكالب الكلاب على الجيف اكلوا العلق ولبسوا الخرق شعثا غبرا يراهم
الناس فيظنون ان بهم داء وما بهم داء ويقال قد خولطوا فذهبت عقولهم وما
ذهبت عقولهم ولكن نظر القوم بقلوبهم الى امر الله الذى اذهب عنهم الدنيا
فهم عند اهل الدنيا يمشون بلا عقول عقلوا حين ذهبت عقول الناس لهم
الشرف في الاخرة يا اسامة اذا رايتهم في بلدة فاعلم انهم امان لاهل تلك البلدة
ولا يعذب الله قوما هم فيهم الارض بهم فرحة والجبار عنهم راض اتخذهم
لنفسك اخوانا عسى ان تنجوا بهم وان استطعت ان ياتيك الموت وبطنك
جائع وكبدك ظمان فافعل فانك تدرى بذلك شرف المنازل وتحل مع
النبيين وتفرح بقدوم روحك الملائكة ويصلى عليك الجبار

"On the Day of Judgment, those people will be closer to God who would have stayed more hungry, thirsty and remorseful [in matters related to their relationship and standing with God]. These people are such hidden *Muttaqoon* (those with pious awe, reverence

and fear of God firmly entrenched in them) that if they are present, no one would notice them and if they are away, no one would search for them, even though every particle of earth is well familiar with them and angels surround them. These people are the best [of all people] in the world. [Other] People lay down on soft, comfortable beds [to sleep peacefully through the night] while they prostrate their foreheads and kneel down on their knees [in acts of worship and devotion to God]. [Other] People have wasted the noble way and [exalted] character of the prophets while they have protected them [by adopting them deep within their souls]. Earth weeps for them when they depart [from their earthly existence] and Divine wrath (displeasure) descends on the city that does not have any one of them [as they were the means of Divine blessings where they lived]. They do not fell for worldliness like dogs fell for carcass. They eat the bare minimum needed, wear old and torn clothes, and live disheveled. People looking at them, form the opinion that perhaps they are afflicted with some illness although in reality, they have no illness. Some people call them imbeciles (fools) even though they possess [keen and sharp] intellect. However, they do not possess intellect for which worldly people have their eyes on and which God have kept away from them. Worldly people think that perhaps they are walking around without intellect [and intelligence needed to live comfortably in the world], although they retain their intellects when it departs from everyone else [due to excessive lust or emotional, psychological, and other distresses]. O Usama! Honor and excellence are for such people in the Hereafter. When you see them in any city, consider that as an edict of peace for that city. God does not put a nation into tribulation in which such people are present. Earth is happy with them and God is pleased with them. Make them your brothers, perhaps you may also attain salvation through them. If you can do this that when time of your death comes, your stomach is hungry, and your kidney is thirsty, then do so. You will attain distinction in stages of the Hereafter, you will live with the prophets, angels will be pleased with the arrival of your soul [back to its heavenly origins] and God will shower His mercy upon you." (This tradition has been narrated in *Kitab us-Zuhd* by Khateeb and in *Al-Maudu'aat* by Ibn Al-Jawzi on the authority of prophetic companions Usama bin Zaid and Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with them] as per the *Hadith* authentication of Hafiz Iraqi [a great *Hadith* (prophetic traditions of Prophet Muhammad) scholar who authenticated all *Hadiths* mentioned in Ghazali's book "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God")

Jesus Christ (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said to his disciples and helpers (*Hawariyoon*): "Keep your stomachs hungry and bodies naked [except for mandatorily covering the parts that must be covered out of modesty and in compliance with the *Shariah* (Divine law)] so that your hearts develop the power to witness God [with the eye of the heart as opposed to the physical eyes]". A similar tradition has come from Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) narrated by Tawoos. Torah (another Divine book that was revealed to Prophet Moses [Peace and blessings of God be upon him]) has a tradition that God does not like an obese scholar because obesity is an indication of heedlessness [from God] and excessive indulgence

in food. It is a bad habit especially for [religious] scholars. Another tradition of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) has these words:

ان الشيطان يجرى من ابن آدم مجرى الدم فضيقوا مجاريه بالجوع والعطش

"Satan runs in the veins of the Children of Adam (human beings) [through blood circulation]. Make his passageways narrow by means of hunger and thirst." (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Ibn Abi ad-Dunya*)

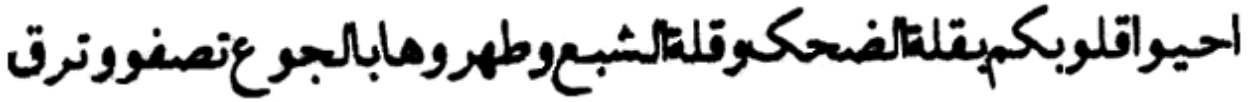
Aisha (May God be pleased with her) [the wife of the Prophet] said: "Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) never ate food to his fill. Sometimes I used to see the marks of hunger on him and cry and used to put my hand on his stomach and say: 'May my life be spent you! You should eat at least the amount that gives you strength and eliminates your hunger'. He used to respond: 'O Aisha! My highly determined brother prophets [of the past like Adam, Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David, Solomon, Moses, John and Jesus (May the peace and blessings of God be upon them all)] had exercised patience on far greater trials, tribulations and sufferings than this. When they left the world and came into the Presence of their Lord, they received tremendous [Divinely endowed] recompense and unbounded honor and exalted status. I feel ashamed that it may happen to me tomorrow that I attain lesser degree than them [before God] due to [enjoying] comforts of a life [that is as short as it's] of a few days. It is better for me to patiently endure hardships for a few days than getting a reduced share in the Hereafter tomorrow and I do not like anything other than being in the company of my friends and brothers (great prophets of the past)". Aisha (May God be pleased with her) said: "It wasn't even a week after this conversation that he met his Lord [as he passed away from this temporal existence to his eternal abode in the Divine Presence]".

Benefits of Hunger and Harms of Gluttony

Question that arises regarding excellences of hunger is: "Why there are so many excellences of an act that pains the stomach? If subjecting oneself to pain and suffering [like hunger] had been a good thing then there could have been other forms of doing that like hitting oneself with a stick, eating dislikable things, etc. However, we see those things are not allowed, then why causing deprivation to the stomach has been declared to be a good deed and made a basis for all good deeds?" The answer to this question is that hunger is like a medicine. If one becomes healthy by means of medicine and conjectures that one has attained health due to medicine's bitterness and unpleasantness and concludes that every bitter and unpleasant thing is beneficial and hence starts to eat every bitter and unpleasant thing, one will be told that the bitterness of the medicine is not what's effective in attaining health but instead it has a certain

property that is known only to the physicians. Same is the case of hunger. [Religious] Scholars are familiar with its benefits. One who remains hungry while believing in the excellences of hunger in the Divine law, will attain benefits regardless of one being knowledgeable of the benefits of hunger or not. However, for the sake of individuals who want to progress from the level of belief to the level of knowledge [and certitude that comes with it], the benefits of hunger will be expounded. There are ten benefits of hunger that are explained here separately as follows:

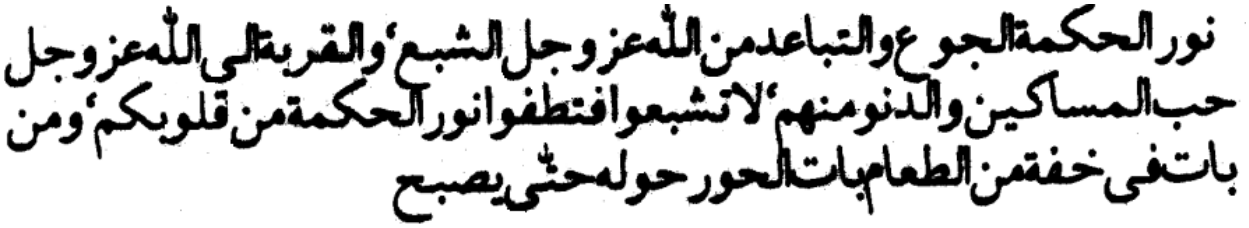
First Benefit – Purity, Lucidity and Limpidity of the Heart (*Safa al-Qalb*): Purity, lucidity and limpidity of the heart includes the perfection of the inner foresight and ability to see through the reality of matters (*Baseerah*). Gluttony engenders dullness of the mind, illumination of the heart diminishes, mind darkens, vapors like the ones from intoxicants, spread through the brain and encompass it in a way that leaves no room for contemplation, heart is not able to perceive anything and all faculties of thinking and understanding diminish. A child who eats more, experiences reduction in power of memory, mind becomes clouded and intelligence is replaced with dullness. Abu Suleiman al-Darani (May God have mercy upon him) [a famous Gnostic and saint] said: "Adopt hunger as it humiliates the lower self (*Nafs*) [that is inclined to every low, negative, harmful and vile propensity, trait and inner characteristic], creates mellowness in the heart [as opposed to hard-heartedness, callousness, arrogance and selfishness] and becomes capable of becoming an inheritor of Heavenly knowledges (knowledge that comes with the state of Divine Gnosis or *Ma'rifa*)". Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:



"Keep your hearts alive with less laughing and less eating and purify them with hunger. They will remain clean and soft [that in turn will help with ascendance on the spiritual path]."

Shibli (May God have mercy upon him) (a famous saint and Gnostic) said: "Whenever I stayed hungry on a given day [purely] for the sake of God, new vistas of wisdom and learning, opened up in my heart that were previously unknown to me". Let it be clear that the real purpose of worship is the attainment of contemplation that leads one to the spiritual unveiling (*Kashf*) of Divine knowledge and Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*) and spiritual realities (*Haqa-iq*) and gluttony is the biggest impediment in this path [to spiritual perfection and attainment]. Hunger opens doors of Divine knowledge and Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*) and that in turn is the door to the Heavenly Paradise [in God's Presence]. In this respect, hunger plays the role of knocking at the door of Paradise. Luqman (May God have mercy upon him) (a famous saint from the Children of Israel at the time of Prophet David [Peace and blessings of God be upon him]) said to his son: "O son! When stomach is full, the power of contemplation goes to sleep, wisdom becomes

dumb and limbs do not have any capacity and energy left for [Divine] worship". Bayazid al-Boustami (May God have mercy upon him) (a famous saint and Gnostic) said: "When a servant [of God] is hungry, wisdom profusely emanates like rain from the heart". Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

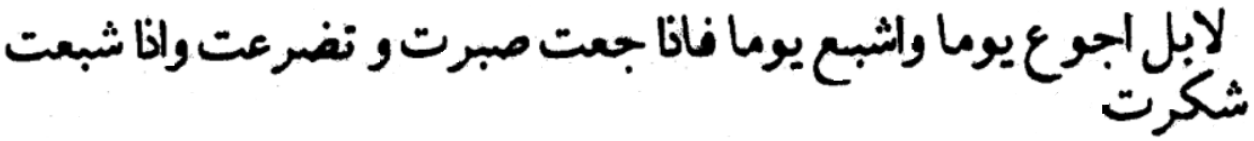

نور الحكمة الجوع والتباعد من الله عز وجل الشبع والقربة الى الله عز وجل
حب المساكين والدنو منهم لا تشبعوا فتطفوا نور الحكمة من قلوبكم ومن
بات في خفة من الطعام بات الحور حوله حتى يصبح

"The light of wisdom is [by means of] hunger and the reason for remoteness from God is gluttony. The proximity and closeness *(Qurb*) of God is in loving the poor and being close to them. Do not eat to your fill, you will extinguish the candle of wisdom in your heart. An individual who has a light stomach, is surrounded by heavenly companions [unseen by the physical eye] until the morning." (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Abu Mansur ad-Daylami* on the authority of prophetic companion Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him])

Second Benefit – Softness and Meekness of the Heart: Heart is softened by hunger and the capacity to find pleasure with Divine remembrance is born in it. Many times, Divine remembrance is there with the presence of the heart but there is no pleasure in it and heart is not moved by it, as if there is a veil between the heart and the Divine remembrance which can be called "*Qasawa*" or "hardness and de-sensitization of the heart". Sometimes, there is so much softness and meekness in the heart that one finds tremendous pleasure with Divine remembrance. The most apparent reason for the attainment of this pleasure is emptiness of stomach [in a state of hunger]. Junaid (May God have mercy upon him - a great saint and Gnostic) said: "Some folks are desirous of indulgence in food and at the same time want the sweetness of intimate colloquy with the Divine". Abu Suleiman al-Darani (May God have mercy upon him - a great saint and Gnostic) used to say: "When one is hungry and thirsty, heart has limpidity and softness; when stomach is full, one's heart has blindness and turbidity". It is evident from this detail that ease of contemplation and having knowledge of and intimacy with the Divine or Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*) is one thing and to find pleasure in it is a separate thing.

Third Benefit – Humility and Mellowness of the Heart: Third benefit of hunger is that it engenders humility and mellowness, and arrogance and euphoria [about worldly pleasures] comes to an end - both of which are fountainheads of rebellion and heedlessness towards God. Lower self (*Nafs*) is not mellowed or humiliated with anything more than hunger. When one is hungry, one takes the name of one's Lord [in a state of Divine remembrance, returning to God in utter neediness], obeys Him and remains humble and meek [before God that in turn makes one do the right things with everyone else around]. At the time of hunger, one's strength weakens, and life becomes constricted due to not having a piece of bread and a sip of water. Unless and

until a human being witnesses one's humiliation and weakness, one does not confess to the greatness, majesty, and overpowering reach of one's Lord [in order to bring one to account for one's wrong actions]. Human being's eternal happiness and endless success (*Sa'adah*) is in witnessing one's lower self (*Nafs*) with the eye of humiliation and incapacity; and witnessing God with the eye of Divine glory and omnipotent power, always remaining hungry and needy of God, finding pleasure in this neediness and perturbation. That's why, when the treasures of the world were put before (shown to) Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) [by the Divine omnipotence], he said:



"No (I don't want them)! Instead, I will remain hungry on one day [in a state of fasting] and eat on another day. When I stay hungry, I will be patient and will cry before You (O God!) [in a state of utter neediness of You, bowing in submission to Your Majesty and Power] and [on the day] when I eat, I will express my profound gratitude to You!" (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Tirmidhi*)

Stomach and private parts are both doors to Hell and the path leading to it passes through gluttony. Humility and meekness [before God] are doors to Paradise and the path leading to it passes through hunger. One who closes one door to Hell, certainly open up a door to Paradise as Paradise and Hell are direct opposite to each other just like the East and the West [directions]. Distancing oneself from one, draws one closer to the other.

Fourth Benefit – Remembrance of Divine Retribution and Drawing Lessons from the State of People Facing Hardships and Sufferings: Fourth benefit is that one does not forget the Divine punishments [for one's own wrongdoings] and remembers the people who have been afflicted with some suffering. It happens that a satiated person forgets about hunger. An intelligent person is the one who remembers the afflictions of the Hereafter upon seeing someone in affliction. Being thirsty, one should imagine people will be afflicted with thirst in the field of Judgment on the Day of Judgment. Being hungry, one should imagine the hunger of the denizens of Hell; when they will get hungry and thirsty, they will eat thorny trees and will drink pus and blood. Punishments of the Hereafter and its pain and suffering should never vanish from the eyes of a servant [of God] (i.e., human beings) as it instigates fear of God [that is a deterrent from all forms of evils and wrongdoings] and one [consequently] treads carefully, saving oneself from sins. A person who is not entrapped by humiliation or financial hardships or affliction of any kind or afflicted with any disease, becomes heedless and neglectful of punishment of the Hereafter. Neither does this remain in any part of one's mind that tomorrow there will be accountability [of all of one's deeds] on the Day of Judgment, nor the fear of God dominates one's heart. Therefore, it is better for a servant [of God] to be beset by some worry or trial. If that's not the case, at least

some worry and trial should remain in one's observation. The greatest of all trial and worry that causes pain is the worry of hunger. One can tolerate everything but not hunger. There are innumerable benefits of hunger besides the remembrance of punishment of the Hereafter. The secret of trials and tribulations faced by Prophets and saints (Gnostics and intimates of God) is that by means of these tribulations, Hereafter always remains in front of them and continual unhampered remembrance and imagining of the Hereafter results in progression in their spiritual ranks [causing spiritual ascension to God]. Someone inquired Prophet Joseph (Peace and blessings of God be upon him): "Why do you stay hungry when the keys to the treasuries of Egypt are in your hands?" He replied: "I am afraid that by eating to my fill, I may end up neglecting the hungry [poor and destitute]". Remembering the hungry and poor [and being compelled to help them as a result thereof] is also one of the benefits from the innumerable benefits of hunger as it fosters sentiments and feelings of kindness and mercy towards people and the desire to feed them. How would a satiated person realize the pain of the hungry?

Fifth Benefit – Eradication of Lusts and Subjugation of the Lower Self that Incites One to Evil (*Nafs al-'Ammara*): This is the most important benefit. The basis of all sins [and wrongdoings] are lusts and human abilities (both bodily organs and inner faculties) that are aided by food. If food intake is reduced, lust and greed weaken, physical power also weakens [consequently]. The perfection of good fortune (*Sa'adah* or eternal happiness and endless success) is that one is dominant over the lower self (*Nafs*) and the perfection (height) of bad fortune (*Shaqawa* or eternal sorrow, damnation and endless failure) is that the lower self dominates one. Just like a wild rebellious horse is tamed by depriving it of water and fodder, similarly the rebellious and intransigent lower self is subjugated by subjecting it to hunger. If horse is rebellious and eats and drinks a lot, its rebellion is not lessened but instead, it increases. Same is the state of the lower self (*Nafs*) as more [and sumptuous] food, especially the ones it is fond and desirous of, makes it more rebellious and disobedient. Someone asked a sage (Gnostic and intimate of God): "You are very weak and have entered a delicate phase of your life. Why don't you nurture your body [with food]?" He replied: "Brother! This body becomes proud very soon and if its reins are loosened by the slightest, it starts doing new mischievous things. I do not nurture it [with food] so it may not become rebellious and put me in destruction. It is better to deal with it strictly without showing any leniency to it than to get involved in sins because of it". Dhun Noon al-Misri (May God have mercy upon him - a famous Egyptian saint and Gnostic) said: "Whenever I ate to my fill, I got involved in some sin or a thought of it came into the heart". Aisha (May God be pleased with her - the wife of Prophet Muhammad) said: "After the demise of Prophet Muhammad [Peace and blessings of God be upon him], the first innovation (*Bid'a* or a new matter that contravenes established principles of faith and thus not sanctioned by it) appeared in the form of satiety (people eating to their fill). When people's stomachs are full, their lower selves (*Nufus*) adopt rebellion and their reins are pulled from the [direction of the] Hereafter to worldliness". This is not the sole benefit [of hunger], instead in this one benefit are embedded innumerable latent

benefits, rather it will be better to call it the "treasury of benefits". It is because hunger has been termed as a treasure from the treasuries of God. The least benefit of hunger is that neither the lust of private parts remains nor the lust of talking; a hungry person's heart does not desire to talk much. In this way, one is protected from the harms [excesses and obscenities] of speech such as lying, backbiting, lewdness and complaining behind people's back. One whose stomach is full thinks of humor. It is obvious that one will satisfy one's sense of humor by insulting people (i.e., by tampering with their dignity). People will go to hell by reaping the harvest of their tongues. Evils of adultery are apparent. A hungry person is protected from its evils as well. If stomach is full, lusts crop up their heads and one is not able to control the private parts. If fear of God (*Taqwa*) serves as an impediment in fulfillment of their desires, it becomes difficult to avoid the adultery of the eyes. If one closes the eyes, there is no control over the heart. Many variegated forms of [lustful] insinuations will keep it perturbed and it will become very difficult to get rid of obscene and lewd thoughts. Sometimes, these thoughts will destroy the peace and tranquility [attained by means] of prayers and supplications [to God]. The harms of tongue and private parts [due to gluttony] are mentioned here as an example. Otherwise, the cause of sins of all seven organs is the same power that is attained by means of gluttony.

Sixth Benefit – Power and Ability to Stay up: Eating less engenders power of staying up. One who eats more will drink more water and that in turn will cause sleepiness. That's why, some spiritual guides used to tell their disciples: "O the group of seekers of truth! Don't eat much! If you eat more, you will drink more and when you drink more, you will sleep more and when you sleep more, you will experience more loss [in terms of depriving yourselves of spiritual benefits that you could have gained by early morning worship]". Seventy Gnostics agree [with the assertion] that one sleeps more when more water is consumed and one's life is wasted more when one sleeps more, early morning prayers (*Tahajjud* prayers that are meritorious for spiritual advancement) don't get done [as a result of excessive sleep], engendering laziness in one's temperament and hardness in one's heart. Life [or lifetime one has] is an extremely priceless jewel, the real asset (capital) of a human being is this very life and through it one does business and trade for the Hereafter. Sleep is akin to death; its excess reduces the capital of life. If one is able to perform early morning prayers despite domination of sleep, one will not taste its sweetness. In short, [excessive] sleep leads to many harms and gluttony engenders sleep and hunger ends it.

Seventh Benefit – Ease of Persistence in Worship: Gluttony is an impediment in the way of excessive worship as it takes time to eat. Sometimes, one has to go out to buy food items and cook them as needed. After meals, washing hands, drinking water during and after meals takes time. If all this [precious] time can be used for Divine remembrance, supplications, and other acts of worship, it would be a source of tremendous benefits. Every moment of life is such an exquisite jewel that its price cannot be set in the marketplace of time. Instead of wasting it, it is better to buy with it a treasure that will remain in the Hereafter [in a state of permanence and eternity]. This

business transaction is finalized by using one's time in God's remembrance and obedience. One accustomed to gluttony is beset with anxiety of not remaining in the state of purity [of ablution that is required for certain acts of worship like prayers], nor can one spend all of one's time in worship as one will need to come out of it to frequently drink water and to relieve oneself. One accustomed to gluttony cannot fast with ease since fasting can be practiced by someone with ease who is accustomed to hunger. Fasting, permanent solitude for Divine worship, perpetual purity (or state of ablution that is a pre-requisite for many acts of worship), using the time spent in acquiring food towards worship are those great benefits that can be ignored only by the heedless. Qur'an says the following regarding such people:

وَرَضُوا۟ بِٱلْحَيَوٰةِ ٱلدُّنْيَا وَٱطْمَأَنُّوا۟ بِهَا

"They have become contented with life of this world and have become satisfied with it [as if materialistic, hedonistic life is all that is there and there is nothing above and beyond it especially in the immaterial, higher, spiritual realm]." (Qur'an, Chapter 10, Verse 7)

يَعْلَمُونَ ظَٰهِرًا مِّنَ ٱلْحَيَوٰةِ ٱلدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ ٱلْـَٔاخِرَةِ هُمْ غَٰفِلُونَ

"They only know about the outer aspects (physical realm of existence) of the life of this world and they are heedless of the Hereafter." (Qur'an, Chapter 30, Verse 7)

Abu Suleiman al-Darani (May God have mercy upon him - a famous Gnostic and saint) mentioned six harms of gluttony. He said: "A person who eats to one's fill, gets involved in six trials and tribulations: one loses the sweetness of intimate Divine colloquy, does not remember the points of wisdom, does not retain any kindness towards other people in one's heart because when one's own stomach is full, one conjectures the same about others that their stomachs are also full, [Divine] worship becomes difficult for such a person, lusts increase, and the greatest loss is that all believers gravitate towards abodes of Divine worship and such a one gravitates towards restaurants".

Eighth Benefit – Health: A person eating less remains healthy. Most diseases arise as a consequence of gluttony since eating more causes bad [food] material to accumulate in stomach and veins and causes various kinds of diseases. If one is sick, one can neither worship nor can one peacefully make Divine remembrance as one remains restless and perturbed all the time, causing the ruining of pleasure (peace, tranquility, and purposeful living) of life. A sick person is in need of surgical procedures, medicines and doctors and this need is not fulfilled without money. Gluttony causes both body and mind to remain worried, weak, and lethargic. Another worry creeps in which is where to get the money from to get medical cure [for self-inflicted harms and diseases causes by excessive food consumption] which is not possible without money. If one had exercised patience [with urge to eat excessively all kinds of foods that one likes] and had contented on smaller amount of food, one would not have dealt with so

many worries [that are the outcome of such carelessness]. A [wise] physician [of the past] said: "A medicine in whose presence there is no possibility left of illness is to not eat until you have [true] desire and to lift your hand [from food] when some desire [to eat] still remains". When below advice of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) was mentioned to a philosopher from the people of the book (i.e., from Jewish or Christian tradition):

ثلث طعام، وثلث شراب، وثلث النفس

"[When you eat, your food intake should be such that space it takes in the stomach is divided up as] one-third for food, one-third for water and one-third left vacant for easy breathing."

The philosopher was completely astonished by it and said: "Nothing can be more accurate and beneficial about food than this saying. No doubt, this is a saying of a wise".

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

البطنة اصل الداء والحمية اصل الدواء وعودوا كل جسم ما اعتاد

"Real [origin of] disease is gluttony and real medicine is prevention. Have the dealing with the body that it is suitable to it (i.e., body should not be subjected to things that are harmful to it such as excessive food consumption, unhealthy foods and drinks, drugs, intoxicants, etc.)"

I personally think that philosopher would have been more amazed by the above prophetic narration. Ibn Salim said: "If one eats wheat bread with proper etiquette, one will never get sick". He was asked: "What is meant by eating with etiquettes?" He replied: "Eating after feeling hungry and stopping to eat before one gets full". Some expert physicians while condemning gluttony said: "The most beneficial thing that enters stomach is pomegranate and the most harmful thing that enters the stomach is salt but small intake of salt is beneficial in comparison to eating excessive amount of pomegranate". A tradition of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) says:

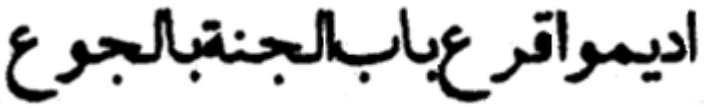
تصوموا تصحوا

"Observe fasting and you will be healthy." (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Tabarani Awsat* on the authority of prophetic companion Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him]). In Islam, fasting is to completely avoid all foods, drinks and marital relations between dawn [a time well before sunrise when it's still dark] and sunset at the very basic level, and at a higher level it is to additionally avoid all moral

vices [such as lying, cheating, quarrels, obscenities, dishonesty, and all forms of injurious and detrimental behavior in thoughts, feelings, words and deeds].

It is known from this that in fasting, staying hungry and in eating less, there is cure for the bodies as well as medicine [for revival, rejuvenation, purification, and strength] for the hearts. If bodies are restrained [through fasting and eating less], hearts also do not incline towards rebellion (all forms of negative, injurious and detrimental behavior) and disobedience [to Divine injunctions that in the first place are there for the well-being and benefit of humanity].

Ninth Benefit – Reduction in Expenditures: One who eats less, will find small amount of wealth and possession to suffice. Stomach is the center and focal point of all the struggle for gluttony and in order to fill the hell of the stomach, one does all types of devising and planning, accumulates all kinds of humiliations, adopts illegal and forbidden (*Haram*) means when legal (*Halal*) means [of earning money and livelihood] are not sufficient. There is sin in earning through illegal means and there could be humiliation, worries and hardships in earning through permissible means. It is because earnings do not come about without greed wherever one looks at [for source of income], one finds greed embedded in it. Greed is extreme humiliation. A believer is the one whose expenses are reduced. A wise man said: "I often fulfill my needs by giving them up. This gives great satisfaction to the heart". One wise said: "When I feel the need to take loan to fulfill my needs, I take a loan from my self (*Nafs*) by making it agreed to abandon that desire and my self gives me a great loan". Ibrahim bin Adham (May God have mercy upon him) used to ask his companions the price of various essential food items and if they mentioned an item to be expensive, he used to tell them to make it cheap by abandoning it. Sahl bin Abdullah al-Tustari (May God have mercy upon him) said: "A person who eats a lot is bad in three situations: If one is among worshippers, one will become lazy after eating more; if one is among those who are skilled at a particular profession, one will not be able to protect [oneself] from hardships; if one gets some income, one will not be able to do justice with one's heart [by protecting its spiritual aspirations and states]". Nevertheless, having greed of the world (wealth and material possessions) is real cause of its destruction and this greed is born because of stomach and private parts, and the real cause of the lust of private parts is stomach. If one eats less, neither the lust of private parts will remain, nor the greed of the world. Greed for the world (wealth and material possessions) is the door of hell. If this door closes, the door to paradise opens up. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:



"Keep knocking at the door of Heaven by means of hunger".

One who has the courage to be contented with one bread (more like one thin pita bread) can be refrained from all lusts. In this contentment, there is the liberation and

freedom of the self and conscious, obliviousness from what people possess [and are capable of in terms of inflicting harms and providing benefits to one], inner comfort (peace and tranquility of the heart), capacity to worship God, and of engaging in the trade for the Hereafter. Such people have been alluded to in the following verse:

لَّا تُلْهِيهِمْ تِجَٰرَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَن ذِكْرِ ٱللَّهِ

"They are not diverted from God's remembrance due to worldly trades (buying, selling and other worldly engagements that are needed to survive in one's worldly sojourn and ephemeral existence)." (Qur'an, Chapter 24, Verse 37)

These people are not heedless and negligent of God's remembrance because they are unattached to the worldly matters (i.e., do not have attachment of the heart to worldly entanglements and bedizenments, although they pay their dues to all that is needed in worldly life). Those who are needy of world (i.e., those who have attachment of their hearts to worldly matters and are fully immersed in it at the expense of their souls) are indeed heedless and oblivious [to the real purpose of their lives that in turn leads to eternal happiness and endless triumph].

Tenth Benefit – Charity and Spending on People in Need: One benefit of eating less is that any food that is not used can be given in charity to orphans and indigents. One who is accustomed to charity and spending on people in need will be in the shade of one's charity as mentioned in various noble traditions of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him). What does one achieve by eating more? [Excessive] Food after consumption becomes human waste and gets deposited in the treasury of waste while the food given in charity will be deposited in the treasury of God. Human wealth and [material] possessions that remain are only the ones that have been spent in the Way of God. Other than that, anything that is spent will become extinct (come to an end), whether it has been consumed [in the form of food] or worn [in the form of clothing]. Hasan al-Basri (May God have mercy upon him - a great Gnostic and saint) recited the following verse from Qur'an:

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا ٱلْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ وَٱلْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَن يَحْمِلْنَهَا
وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا ٱلْإِنسَٰنُ ۖ إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا

"We presented this trust to the heavens and the earth, but they refused to accept its responsibility and became afraid of it, but human being took over this responsibility upon oneself. One (i.e., human being) is [no doubt] oppressive and ignorant." (Qur'an, Chapter 33, Verse 72)

He then said: "God asked the seven heavens bedecked with stars to carry the burden of this [Divine] trust and said: 'Are you willing to carry this trust and what it contains?'

They asked: 'What is in this trust?' He replied: 'If one does evil, one will find punishment and if one does good, one will find [excellent] recompense'. Heavens replied: 'We are unable to carry this trust'. Then this trust was offered to earth but it refused as well. Lofty mountains were asked, and they also deemed their peace to be in expressing their inability and shortcomings in bearing this trust. When human being was asked about it [in the realm of souls prior to coming into this world], one accepted this responsibility because one was oppressive on one's self (*Nafs*) and unaware of the wisdom behind this Divine commandment. By God! We are now witnessing the oppression and ignorance of human beings. People sell their faith in lieu of wealth, earn in abundant quantities to increase the expanse [and splendor] of their homes in lieu of constricting and narrowing their graves (i.e., ruining their lives in the Hereafter), make their animals (riding mounts that have traditionally been a source of pride, prestige and social standing) fat in lieu of making their *Deen* (path to God and relationship with Him) thin. Such people go to kings (powerful and influential people of fame and authority) morning and evening and [as a result of that] are oppressive towards themselves. In one's heart, the desire for material possessions and wealth is kicking, in someone else's heart, there is desire for fame. One goes around with the desire for [sumptuous and variety of] meals without considering any differentiation of permissible [in the Divine law] or realization of forbidden [in the Divine law]. When it causes indigestion and typhoid, servants are demanded to bring in medicines that mitigate such conditions. Someone should ask this imbecile: 'What happened to those orphan children, widows and indigents whose caring is your [moral] obligation whom you have forgotten due to your desire for food and taste?'"

The purpose of this detail is to bring home the point that only needed amount of food should be consumed and rest should be given out in charity so that it gets deposited in the repository of the Hereafter. Once Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) saw an obese man and he put his finger on his belly [alluding to undesirability of obesity - its cause being gluttony, being out of shape, its harmful implications for one's health and inner spirituality] and said: "If this food had been in someone else's stomach [who is in need of it due to poverty] instead of your stomach then it would have been better for you [both physically and spiritually]". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Musnad Ahmed, Hakim and Bayhaqi* on the authority of prophetic companion Ja'da al-Hathmi [May God be pleased with him])

Hasan al-Basri (May God have mercy upon him) said: "By God! We have seen such people who had very little to eat and if they had eaten that, it would have been insufficient for them. They still said that they would not eat even that meagre quantity by themselves but include others in it [to partake in that meagre amount of food] for the sake of God".

These are the ten benefits of hunger where every benefit constitutes innumerable [other] benefits. The upshot of all these benefits is that hunger is the treasure of the Hereafter. That's why, many wise scholars have said that hunger is the key to the

Hereafter and door to abstention from worldliness, and gluttony is the key to worldliness and door to greed. This subject has also been proven through the narrations and traditions mentioned for the excellence of hunger and condemnation of satiety [and gluttony]. After gaining awareness of these benefits, the knowledge of this subject's details and its real meanings, will be based on certitude (*Yaqeen*) and deep insight (*Baseerah*). If one does not possess knowledge of these benefits but still considers hunger as superior, then one will be at the level of faith by following [without comprehending the reality of matter] (*Taqleed*).

Differences in Rulings, Excellences and Human States Related to Hunger

Let it be known that attaining the level of moderation or the middle path is the objective in all matters and in *Ikhlaq* (beautiful morals, manners, inner character traits, disposition and qualities) as mentioned in below *Hadith* (tradition of Prophet Muhammed [Peace and blessings of God be upon him]):

خیر الامور اوساطها

"Best of all matters are the ones in which moderation is exercised or the middle path is taken".

The two sides [or two ends of the spectrum] or extremes, in other words, excess or paucity [of anything in all matters] are both condemned. It can be understood from what has been written [here] in the excellence of hunger that the excess of hunger is the objective, even though that's really not the case. Instead, the secrets of the Divine law, that are full of wisdom, are of such nature that in matters where human temperament is inclined towards extremes and they contain seeds of [inner and outer] turmoil then those matters are forbidden with great exaggeration (emphasis) in such a way that even an ignoramus can understand that the purpose of Divine law is to make one act against the temperament [to make one a better person]. Only a scholar (one well versed in religious knowledge and understanding) understands that the objective of exaggeration in forbidding [from harmful matters] is [to bring one to the level of] moderation or the middle path [devoid of all extremes]. This is because [only] a scholar knows that gluttony dominates the human temperament and people have reached the level of extreme (excessiveness in food intake) and it is more appropriate to mention more and more excellences of hunger and people should be stopped from gluttony with exaggeration so that the [human] temperament reaches the level of moderation [in this matter related to food consumption]. It is not possible to end [human] temperament but it is possible to bring it to the level of moderation or the middle path. Therefore, if someone goes against the temperament and spends excessively, the Divine law condemns this action. For example, innumerable excellences of staying up at night to worship God and of fasting are mentioned in *Hadith* (traditions of Prophet Muhammad

[Peace and blessings of God be upon him]) but when Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) learned that some people fast perpetually and stay up all night then he forbade them from doing so. After this discussion on principles, it should be known that the superior and moderate method in eating is to eat only as much that neither causes heaviness in the stomach nor causes the pangs of hunger. Purpose of eating is to maintain life and acquire bodily strength for worship. The heaviness of stomach is also an impediment to worship and emptiness of stomach also keeps the heart busy. One should eat to the extent that it erases the pangs of hunger while the effect of food is also not known. Eating like this causes human beings to resemble angels because they are above the pangs of hunger and heaviness of food [in stomach]. Following them can only lead human beings to the level of excellence and perfection which is the purpose of one's creation. On one side of this level of moderation is gluttony and on the other side is hunger. Both of them are fatal. In protecting oneself from both of them to adopt the path of moderation, lies the subsistence of life. Its similitude is like an ant that is left in the middle of a circle of fire. Whichever way it turns, there is death because the circle is hot from all sides and its small flame can end its little life. However, if the ant stays in the center and does not go in any direction, it will remain away from the fire and will be able to keep its life protected. Such is the state of a human being as lusts have surrounded one from all sides. Angels are far away from the lusts. The only way to acquire their resemblance is to distance oneself from the lusts because the level of moderation is at an equal distance from all sides [to remain in the true center of the circle]. Hence, it (moderation) is being sought and since the level of moderation is at an equal distance from all sides and its evidence is found in *Hadith* (tradition of Prophet Muhammad [Peace and blessings of God be upon him]), "Best of all matters are the ones in which moderation is exercised or the middle path is taken" and is verified by this verse from Qur'an:

وَكُلُوا۟ وَٱشْرَبُوا۟ وَلَا تُسْرِفُوٓا۟ ۚ

"Eat and drink and do not exceed the bounds of moderation to commit excesses." (Qur'an, Chapter 7, Verse 31)

Moderation in Hunger and Satiety: Until human beings feel the pangs of hunger and heaviness of gluttony, focus on [Divine] worship cannot be achieved. To make worship and contemplation easy, it is necessary that one neither remains hungry nor satiated. Since the human self (*Nafs*) is initially rebellious, fond of lusts, and distant from the limits of moderation, there are difficulties in bringing it to the center point of excess and paucity. In the beginning, there is exaggeration in forbidding it from things. For example, to bring it to the middle level between [the extremes of] hunger and gluttony, the first thing to do is to cause difficulties to the self by keeping it hungry just like a wild rebellious horse is initially kept hungry, thirsty and even beaten to bring it into control. After passing through this stage, the horse gets controlled and becomes subservient to the wishes of its master. Once the horse leaves its rebelliousness and becomes

obedient, there is no need left to keep it hungry, thirsty, and subjected to bodily hardships. A spiritual guide gives the same treatment to the disciples (aspirants and travelers on the spiritual path) and tells them to do things that the guide oneself does not do. For example, one tells them to stay hungry and abandon all lusts, although the guide oneself does not stay hungry nor totally disengages from all desires (many desires are legitimate within the bounds of the Divine law). At times, the guide engages in fruits after meals and enjoys other tastes and desires because one's self is obedient [and subservient to the Divine injunctions] and there is no need to subject it to more spiritual exercises and trainings. However, since self (*Nafs*) is dominated by greed, lust, rebelliousness and laziness in Divine worship, hunger is better for it so that it continues to feel its pain and becomes humble and through it, reaches the level of moderation, i.e., moderation in food intake. Among the travelers of the spiritual path, only two [types of] people refrain from staying hungry - a Gnostic and a self-delusional fool. A Gnostic does not need to stay hungry as the self is on the straight path of guidance and in treading the path of truth, it is not in need of being afflicted with hunger. A fool does not remain hungry because one has this conjecture about oneself that one is a Gnostic and the self is in no need of spiritual striving and disciplining. This is a great deception and most people are involved in this deception of the eye. There is great difficulty in complete disciplining of the self. Generally, people take the spiritual states of the Gnostics and think that their own states are like that, irrespective of this being right or not, and [just] like Gnostics, become oblivious to the means [of achieving such sublime spiritual states and do not adopt those means].

A spiritual guide should not mention the secrets [related to spiritual matters and inner wisdom behind various spiritual teachings] in front of the disciples (spiritual travelers who are at the beginning of the spiritual path). Instead, they should be instructed to be hungry as much as possible. Educating them about level of moderation [in food intake] is not suitable because they will deviate from moderation to a certain extent [as they are beginner students]. They should be instructed in exercising great deal of hunger so that it becomes easy for them to attain the level of moderation [as disciples do less than what they are asked to do]. Disciples (spiritual travelers) should not be told that a spiritually perfected person (Gnostic) is not in need of spiritual rigors and disciplining of the self [as such a person has already undergone that and has achieved high spiritual degrees]. If they are told that, Satan will insinuate in their hearts that they have attained to a very high level of Gnosis and spiritual perfection and they are no longer in need of any more spiritual rigors as informed by the spiritual guide (*Shaykh*). Ibrahim al-Khawas (May God have mercy upon him - a Gnostic, saint and spiritual guide) had this routine that whatever spiritual rigors he instructed to his disciples, he himself carried them out [even though he himself was not in need of them but he did them to not give a misleading impression to the disciples that they don't need them as he did not need them] so that they would not think that they are instructed to do things that the spiritual guide himself does not do. This thought could lead disciples (spiritual travelers) to get disgusted with the spiritual strivings [by misleadingly perceiving hypocrisy in the spiritual guide as Satan is out there actively striving to dissuade people from the right path of

guidance at every step of the way and in every situation one is in]. Spiritual guide (*Shaykh* or *Murshid*) sometimes needs to come down from one's [spiritual] rank just like wrestlers act weak and even get knocked out for the sake of exercising and training their students to teach them various wrestling moves. For the sake of training the self, compared to the bodily exercises, gentleness and subtlety are needed more. Spiritual strivings and rigors are grounds of great trial [for spiritual travelers]. Prophets and saints have undergone such trials and tribulations. That's why, care and caution must be exercised in this matter. When Umar (May God be pleased with him - a great prophetic companion who later on became a great world leader) came to know that his son Abdullah ate meat with bread every day, he became furious and told him: "O Unworthy person! One day eat bread with meat, one day eat bread with milk, one day eat bread with ghee (milk-based fat), one day eat bread with oil, one day eat bread with salt and on some days just eat bread with nothing else". It is known from this that this is what moderation is all about. To practice permanence and regularity in eating meat and indulging in lusts [like that every day] amounts to excess [and thus extremism in matters related to eating]. To abandon them completely is paucity and to eat sometimes and not eat sometimes is moderation.

Harms of Eating Less and Abandoning Lusts

It should be known that one who embarks on abandoning lusts, becomes a target of two harms. These harms are more dangerous than eating one's favorite foods. One harm is that the self cannot leave some lusts. The spiritual traveler wants to leave them but one's self (*Nafs*) does not allow it. In order to fulfil the desire of the lower self, spiritual traveler eats one's favorite thing in secret by hiding it from people. This is hidden polytheism (*Skirk al-Khafi*). If this situation arises, one should reveal one's desire. This revealing is what truthfulness of one's [inner] state is all about. To keep one's faults secret and showing one's excellences [to others] have two harms in them. Until one repents sincerely from it, the Divine displeasure is not removed. It is the perfection of Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*) to abandon lusts for the sake of God and keep showing that one is involved in them. This is done so that one becomes lowly in the eyes of people. One saint used to buy good food items and put them in his house at prominent places so that people would think that he eats those things although he used to eat very simple food. The display was to allow people to not think of him as saint, so they won't approach him by thinking of him as a saint. The perfection of *Zuhd* (abstinence from worldliness) is that one acts against it to show that one is not abstinent but instead is involved in lusts. This is the action of the Gnostics or spiritually perfected individuals (*Siddiqeen*) since they have combined two truths by putting two burdens on their selves (*Nafs*) and have exercised patience twice - once when they said goodbye to their favorite things and second time when people condemned and criticized them by looking at their outer states [that appeared to be involved in lusts, worldliness and non-abstinent acts as they

deliberately created that impression to avoid the fame and veneration that comes with being a saint or Gnostic]. It has been said about such people:

أُولَٰئِكَ يُؤْتَوْنَ أَجْرَهُم مَّرَّتَيْنِ

"Such people will receive double the Divine recompense." (Qur'an, Chapter 28, Verse 54)

Their state is like the one who accepts a gift when offered in front of everyone but later returns it back clandestinely. Such a one will be pained due to two things: firstly, due to being humiliated by giving one something in front of everyone [as there is lowliness in taking things from others]; secondly due to returning the same thing back clandestinely even though one was in need of it. If a spiritual traveler (*Salik*) is not able to reach this rank, one should not refrain from announcing one's faults and expressing one's inability to stay away from desires, and should not get fooled by this deception of Satan that if one reveals one's faults, people will follow such a one in those faults and it is better to keep one's faults hidden for the sake of reforming people. Spiritual traveler or seeker should understand that one's own [inner spiritual] reformation is more important than the reformation of the people. The purpose of keeping one's own faults hidden from the point of view of reforming people is ostentation or show off (*Riya*). Such a person is busy in following Satan under the pretext of reforming others. The reality is that, such a one does not want to reveal one's faults because of the fear of people avoiding one. Such a person neither wants one's own reformation nor the reformation of others.

Second harm is that the spiritual traveler or seeker is practically able to abandon lusts, but one is fond of being famed as abstinent [from worldliness] (*Zahid*) and is pleased when people call one "sinless". This seeker has abandoned one weaker lust [related to food] but is involved in a far greater lust and that is the seeking of fame and desire for honor and prestige. This is a secret lust and one who is involved in it, comes to know about one's involvement in it quite late. Eradicating this lust is more important and necessary compared to ending the lust for food. One who is distant from show off but is involved in the lust of food is better than the one who has abandoned the lust for food but is indulged in the love for fame. Abu Suleiman (May God have mercy upon him) said: "When some food comes in front of you that you have abandoned, then eat a small amount from it, however, do not fulfil the desire of the self [by eating more]. This way, both the lusts of the self will end - the lust for food and the lust for fame and prestige [for being abstinent from worldliness]". The abandoner of the lust for food and indulgent in the lust for show off is like the one who escapes from a scorpion to find refuge by the side of a snake, although snake is more lethal for one [than a scorpion]. Similarly, showing off is more harmful than the desire for food.

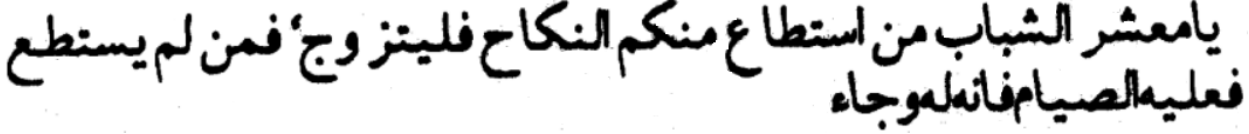
Lust of the Private Parts

It should be known that the desire for copulation has been [Divinely] created in human beings for two benefits. One benefit is that human beings can deduce the pleasure of the Hereafter from the pleasure of copulation. If this pleasure had been long lasting, it would have been the strongest of all the bodily pleasures. People need incentive and persuasion to achieve eternal happiness and this need is completely fulfilled when some pain that can be felt or some pleasure that can be felt and perceived, is employed as a means to the eternal happiness.

Second benefit of copulation is the continuation of the human race. These are the two benefits, but many harms are also embedded in it, if one does not keep control over oneself and does not bring this lust to the level of moderation, as one can lose both the worldly success as well as the faith. It has been narrated in a tradition that Prophet Moses (Peace and blessing of God be upon him) was sitting in a gathering when Satan came [in human form]. He had a hat on his head in which a lot of colors were shining. After arriving at this gathering, he took off his cap and greeted him. Prophet Moses (Peace and blessing of God be upon him) said to him: "Who are you?" He replied: "I am *Iblees* (Satan)". Prophet Moses said: "May God give you death! Why did you come here?" He said: "You are at a great rank and degree before God, hence I came to offer my salutations to you". Prophet Moses asked: "Why were you wearing a hat made of different colors?" He replied: "I snatch the human hearts and deceive them through this hat". Prophet Moses asked: "Through which human actions are you able to subjugate them?" He replied: "When arrogance is born in human heart and one thinks of one's little actions (good deeds) as big and forgets about one's sins. I forewarn you about three matters: One is to not be alone with a stranger (potentially marriageable) woman as when that happens, I personally come in between them without sending any of my disciples in order to get them involved in a *Fitna* (trial and tribulation due to inappropriate actions). Second is to fulfil whatever promises you make. Third is that the money that you set aside for mandatory and voluntary charity, distribute it immediately. I also make haste to arrive at such occasions and adopt such excuses that one changes the intention that prevents one from giving out the charity". After that, Satan left saying: "Alas! Moses now knows those things in which human beings are afflicted [to their detriment]". Half of Satan's army is lust and half of it is anger. Through this very army [comprising of both lust and anger], Satan conquers the hearts. The greatest of all lusts in the lust for the opposite gender.

Three Levels of Lusts of the Private Parts: Like the lust of food, this lust also has three levels: Excess, paucity, and moderation. Excess is that this lust overtakes the intellect and one does not have any purpose left other than seeking sexual gratification. One gets immersed in it and forgets about the way of the Hereafter and it dominates one's faith and involves one into evils. Excess of this lust gives rise to many evils. For example, one worries about medicines that enhance this capability. It's like one getting surrounded by wild beasts and snakes and when they become negligent that allows one to escape, one awakens them to attack oneself as per their natural instincts. One suffers all kinds of humiliations to fulfil the excess of this lust to the extent of even accepting slavery to it. One puts the dead body of one's intellect and enlightenment in the feet of this lust even though human beings have been created so that all other

creations obey them. Human beings have not been created so that one becomes a slave to one's passions and lusts and leave no stone unturned in serving them. This is the disease of a heart that has no other purpose. One can be safeguarded from lust in its initial stages. Once it strengthens and is fully entrenched [in one's mind, heart, and soul], it becomes very difficult to eradicate it. Same is the state of the love of wealth, fame, property, and progeny as their love does not dissipate after getting fully entrenched. This happens to such as extent that one's interest in various sports, leisurely pursuits [and other pursuits, obsessions, and addictions] that one does not give importance to anything from the world and faith in front of them. These things keep one perturbed and restless at all times. One who extinguishes the fire of lust (obsessions and addictions that deviate one from the path of truth and dissipate any spiritual aspirations) in the initial stages, is like the one who wants the horse to not enter through the door. Hence, whenever it turns its face towards the door, one holds its reins and pulls it away. One who tries to extinguish the fire after it starts to rage, is like the one who at first allows the horse to enter through the door and when it has entered, one grabs its tail to try to pull it out. Will the horse not resist and be rebellious then? How much of a vast difference exists between the two situations? Therefore, it is better to exercise care and caution in the beginning stages. When an illness becomes severe, it takes tremendous amount of effort and struggle to cure it. It is also condemnable that one loses this capability to become unmanly. Level of moderation is that one is not subservient to the lust but instead, the lust is subservient to intellect and the Divine law and obeys their instructions. The excess of this lust [of the private parts] can be cured by means of hunger and marriage. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:



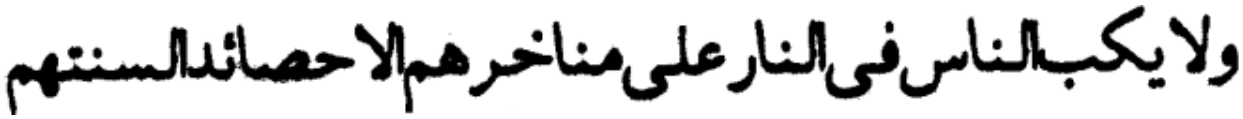
"O Young People! Whoever of you is able to get married should do so and one who is not able to marry [due to not being able to fulfil the marital responsibilities due to one's situation in life] should fast because fasting is, for such a person, a way of making one dormant [in terms of one's desire for physical intimacy as fasting helps develop an inner self control to keep one's passions and lusts in check]."

Excellence of Safeguarding Against the Adultery of the Eyes: Close to the one who safeguards oneself from adultery despite having an opportunity to do so, is the one who safeguards oneself from the adultery of the eyes. It should be known that the starting point of adultery is the eye. Its protection is more important. Since it is more difficult to stop the eyes from watching [what they should not be looking at], people have started to be negligent about this (protecting their eyes from watching what is construed as immoral and inappropriate to watch), and started to think that it's no big deal, and do not consider its sin to be important [enough to be prevented] although the starting point of all the harms is eyes. First sight, if there is no involvement of a purpose or intent, is [Divinely] forgiven, but there is reckoning and accountability for the second glance [that is usually done with an intent and purpose]. It is because the glance sows the seed of lust in the heart. However, if eyes are protected and prevented from watching [all types of inappropriate things] then heart remains protected from many harms.

Chapter 4 - Irreparable Harms of Unrestrained Speech

Ghazali's fourth book in the third volume or quarter of his *magnum opus* "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God" deals with calamities caused by unrestrained speech and unscrupulous use of this faculty. Harms are done and conflicts are sown among individuals, societies, and entire nations, leading to enmities and even wars when people of authority unleash their tongues against perceived adversaries. Entire nations get engulfed in endless conflicts as a result of that. At individual level, unrestrained and imprudent talk can lead to soured and severed relations among people, and friendships converting into enmities leading to mutual hate that can spiral out of control. Unrestrained speech is not limited to spoken words. Written words in the form of published material are more potent in inflicting harms and sowing conflicts that destroy inner and outer peace. Hence, the harvest of the tongue can be lethal and destructive at every level. Ghazali goes into the harms of unrestrained speech, reasons for getting compelled into unrestrained speech, and curing this ill to promote peace, respect and harmony between peoples and nations. Any undertaking to inculcate positivity, harmony, and peace within one's soul and to acquire spiritual perfection, hinges heavily on restraining this human faculty that is a potential spoiler. Ghazali's masterful treatment of this topic of immense importance in book entitled "Harms of the [Misuse of] Tongue" is presented here in condensed form as follows [10]:

Tongue - A Great Blessing: Tongue is a great blessing from the blessings of God and a subtlety from the subtleties of [Divine] creations. Its size may be small but its obedience [to Divine injunctions] is tremendous and the sin is also tremendous. The realities of both faith (*Iman*) and disbelief (*Kufr*) are expressed through the tongue. The first mentioned thing (faith) is the pinnacle of [Divine] obedience and second mentioned thing (disbelief) is the extremity of [Divine] disobedience. Everything whether existing or not, Creator or creation, imaginary or real, conjectured or superstition, comes on the tongue [and is expressed by it] and it either performs affirmation or denial of it. Everything that is within the realm of knowledge, whether truth or falsehood, is elaborated through the tongue. This is such a characteristic that distinguishes tongue over all other [bodily] organs. The reach of the eye is limited to colors and forms, the circle of jurisdiction of ears is just the sounds, hands can only be stretched to things that possess physical existence, and same is the state of all [bodily] organs. Tongue is the only one among them that has a wide and expansive area of jurisdiction. Just like tongue is able to run in the field of goodness, similarly there is no one to defeat it in the field of evil. That's why, it is imperative to keep it under control. One who does not keep control over one's tongue, Satan makes it say whatever it wants and takes one to a bad ending. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:



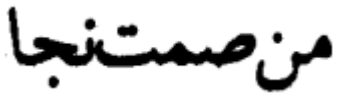
“People, in order to reap the harvest they sowed from their tongues, will be thrown in hell by their noses.”

Only that person can protect oneself from the evils of the tongue who puts the reins of the Divine law (*Shari'ah*) on it, and puts the chains of the Prophetic way (*Sunnah*), and liberates it only when it needs to talk about something that is beneficial for the worldly matters as well as for the Hereafter. Furthermore, one restrains it with everything whose beginning and ending can result in bad consequences.

However, to find out what is good to talk about and what is bad or evil, where it is better to liberate the tongue to talk and where it is bad, is extremely difficult. Even if it is known, it is even more difficult to act upon it. Of all human organs, the greatest number of disobediences [to Divine injunctions that pertain to common universal human decencies] take place with the tongue. This is because neither there is difficulty in moving it, nor is there any tiredness and laziness in doing so. People exercise laziness in safeguarding themselves from the harms of the tongue and ignore its evil considering it insignificant, even though it is the most effective weapon in Satan’s arsenal [for sowing discord, anarchy, turmoil and open warfare between individuals, communities and nations]. It is by means of the tongue, Satan is able to defeat the servants of God and compels them to tread the path of misguidance. In the coming pages, by the ability granted by God, we will list the harms of tongue separately and with great detail, will mention the limits and consequences of all harms, and strategies for protecting ourselves from them. There is a total of twenty harms of tongue. Before explaining them, the dangers of [misuse of] tongue and excellence of silence will be mentioned first.

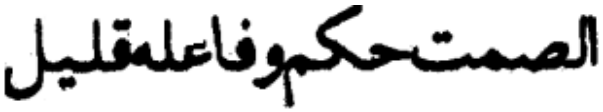
The Great Danger of Tongue and Excellence of Silence

It should be known that the danger of tongue is great and the only way of protection from it is silence. Hence, the Divine law has praised silence and persuaded its adherents to stay silent [by not talking unnecessarily]. That’s why, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:



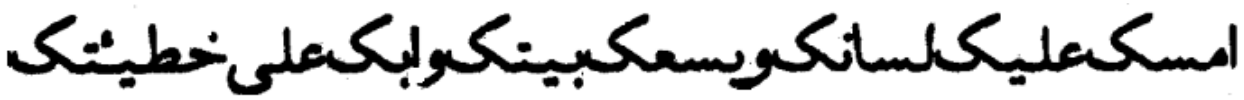
“One who stayed silent attained salvation (deliverance and protection from many harms and dangers including one’s standing before God that is imperative for attaining Divine forgiveness and acceptance).” (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection

Tirmidhi on the authority of prophetic companion Abdullah bin Umar [May God be pleased with him])



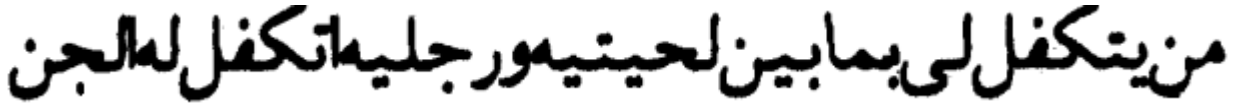
“Silence is wisdom but there are only a few who act on it.” (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Abu Mansur ad-Daylami* on the authority of prophetic companion Abdullah bin Umar [May God be pleased with him])

Uqba bin Amir (May God be pleased with him) said that I asked Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him): “What is the path of salvation?” He said:

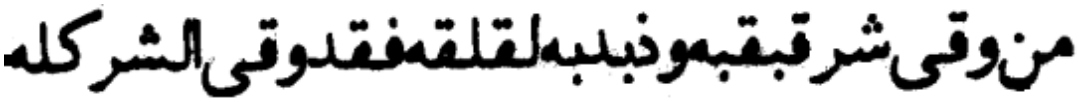


“Guard and control your tongue, your home should be sufficient for you and shed tears on your mistakes and wrongdoings”. (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Tirmidhi*)

Sahl bin Sa’ad Al-Sa’adi narrates from Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him):



“One who guarantees me the chastity of what one has been the two ears (i.e., tongue) and what one has between the two legs (i.e., private parts), I will guarantee Paradise to such a one”. (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Sahih Bukhari*)



“One who protected oneself from the evils of one’s stomach, private parts and tongue, remained protected from all kinds of evils.” (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Abu Mansur ad-Daylami* on the authority of prophetic companion Anas bin Malik [May God be pleased with him])

These are the three organs; the lust thereof brings about the destruction of the people. Hence, after elaborating on the lust of the stomach and private parts, I found it necessary to elaborate on the harms of the [misuse of] tongue. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) was asked about the thing that due to which people will go to heaven. He replied:

"The [pious awe, reverence and] fear of God (*Taqwa*) and beautiful morals, manners, character and inner disposition (*Ikhlaq*)."

He was asked: "Please tell us also what would lead people to hell?" He replied:

الاجوفان الفم والفرج

"Due to two hollow things: the mouth and the private parts." (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Tirmidhi* and *Ibn Majah* on the authority of prophetic companion Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him])

In this *Hadith* (prophetic tradition), "mouth" may also refer to as the harms of the tongue as the mouth is the abode of tongue and it may also refer to stomach as mouth the pathway for filling up the stomach. Mu'adh bin Jabal (May God be pleased with him) asked Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him): "O Prophet of God! Will there also be accountability for [even the] things we say [as just saying something, no matter what it is, should not even be a big deal]?" Upon that, he replied:

تكلتك امك يا ابن جبل' وهل يكب الناس فى النار على مناخرهم الا حصائد السنتهم

"O Ibn Jabal! May your mother weep for you! People will be put in hell upside down for reaping the harvest of their tongues". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Tirmidhi*, *Hakim* and *Ibn Majah* on the authority of prophetic companion Mu'adh bin Jabal [May God be pleased with him])

Abdullah bin Umar (May God be pleased with him) narrates from Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) who said:

من كف لسانه ستر الله عورته ومن ملك غضبه وقاه الله عذابه ومن اعتذر الى الله قبل الله عذره

"One who stops one's tongue [from useless and evil utterances], God hides the faults of such a one, and one who controls one's anger [from venting and lashing it out on people even when one feels justified and entitled to do so], God protects one from His retribution [for one's own wrongdoings], and whoever presents an excuse to God, He accepts the excuse." (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Ibn Abi ad-Dunya* on the authority of prophetic companion Abdullah bin Umar [May God be pleased with him])

Jesus Christ (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) was asked to inform of an action that would lead one to Heaven. He replied: "Never speak". The questioner said:

"That is not possible". He then said: "If it is necessary to speak then do not say anything other than what is good". A Bedouin (nomadic desert Arabian man) came to Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) and asked about an action that would lead to Heaven. He responded:

اطعم الجائع واسق الظمان وامر بالمعروف وانه عن المنكر فان لم تطق
فكف لسانك الا من خير

"Feed the hungry, give water to thirsty, command the right, exhort against evil, if you cannot do that then prevent the tongue from saying anything other than what is good". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Ibn Abi ad-Dunya*)

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

اذا رأيتم المئومن صموتا وقورا فادنوا منه فانه يلقن الحكمة

"When you see a believer quiet and dignified then get closer as such a one is being [Divinely] instructed in wisdom". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Ibn Majah* on the authority of prophetic companion Abu Khalad [May God be pleased with him])

Jesus Christ (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said: "There are ten parts of worship. Nine are related to silence and one part is related to escaping from the people".

The Reason for Superiority of Silence: There are a lot of harms in speaking. Mistakes, lies, backbiting, tale bearing, ostentation, lewdness, showing off, self-aggrandizement, quarrelling, useless talk, self-praise, exaggeration, causing harm, bringing out people's faults and other harms like that are related to none other than the tongue. There is no pain, effort, and tiredness in moving the tongue. Instead, there is enjoyment in speaking. One's own temperament persuades one to talk and Satan also pushes one for it [through his insinuations in the heart]. Those people who are used to talking [unnecessarily and excessively], are seldom able to stop their tongues from speaking whether there is an opportunity or not. Instead, they continue to talk regardless of the consequences. Nevertheless, there are many dangers in speaking and there is safety from all dangers in silence. Hence, its superiority and excellence is far greater. There are innumerable benefits of silence. One's courage remains collected and thoughts do not get scattered, one remains dignified [as a result of silence]. One has the time for contemplation, Divine remembrance, and worship. One gets rid of wrong consequences of speaking in the world and its accountability in the life after. God has said:

مَّا يَلْفِظُ مِن قَوْلٍ إِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيبٌ عَتِيدٌ

"One does not utter a word that a watcher nearby watching over one, is ready for [to record it] (this is referring to the two angels that are near every human being, one writing down all good deeds and one writing down all of one's bad deeds in their respective registers of human actions for that person. These registers will be produced before God on the Day of Judgment for the final judgment for that person)". (Qur'an, Chapter 50, Verse 18)

Here is an excellent argument regarding the excellence of staying silent. There are four types of speech. First type has only harm in it. Second type has only benefits in it. Third type has both benefits and harms. Fourth type neither has any benefit or harm. As far as the type of speech is concerned that only has harm in it, it is imperative to stay away from it and to stay silent. Same instruction applies for speech that has both benefits and harms in them provided the harm exceeds the benefit. The type that neither has benefit or harm is useless and it is better to stay silent from that because indulgence in it is wasting one's time and that is a supreme loss. Only fourth type remains now [which is the type that only has benefits in it]. This way, three out of four parts of speech are gone and only one part remains and there are dangers and possibilities of harms present in it. Sometimes, ostentation, artificiality, embellishment, backbiting, self-aggrandizement, and other evils creep into the speech in such a way that the speaker does not even realize it. That's why, even the one having beneficial talk and conversation is like the one playing with dangers. A person who understands the subtleties of the harms related to tongue will be compelled to admit that in this connection, the below saying of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) retains the status of the final word on the subject:

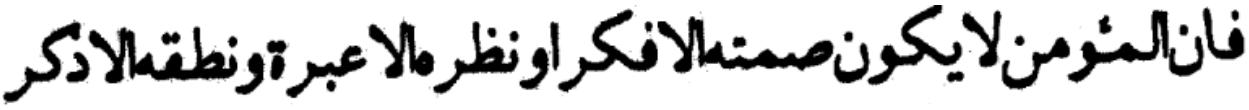
من صمت نجا

"One who stayed silent attained salvation (deliverance and protection from many harms and dangers including one's standing before God that is imperative for attaining Divine forgiveness, acceptance and intimacy)." (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Tirmidhi* on the authority of prophetic companion Abdullah bin Umar [May God be pleased with him])

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) was [Divinely] bestowed the capability of saying extremely meaningful things in a few words and was bestowed with the priceless jewel of wisdom. Every word uttered from his blessed tongue possesses in it a fathomless ocean of meanings and wisdom. To dive and pick out pearls from the bottom of this fathomless ocean is the work of selected scholars only (those who are firmly ingrained in knowledge owing to their God-fear, absolute dedication to truth and sincerity in following it with utmost purity of their soul). It is not within the ambit of everyone [whether a scholar or not] to understand the deep inner wisdom of prophetic speech.

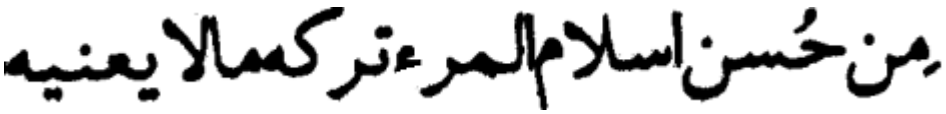
The Harms of Misuse of Tongue or Speech

First Harm of Tongue – Useless Talk: It's better to safeguards one's words from all harms that have been mentioned just now such as backbiting, talebearing, lying and disputing, etc., and only say things that are permissible and saying them does not harm the speaker or the listener. Some permissible and harmless things uttered by the tongue are such that they need not be uttered. These are useless and non-beneficial things. There is waste of time in them as well as the accountability of the Hereafter and the act of leaving behind something superior and exchanging it for something inferior. This is because if speaker instead of speaking, had inclined one's heart and mind to contemplation in God's Being (*Dhat*) and Divine qualities (*Sifat*), it would have been better for one. It was very possible that as a result of this contemplation, the doors of Divine blessings would have opened for one and heart would have received an expansion (clarity, illumination, limpidity). Instead of speaking, if one had glorified God and had expressed His sanctity and oneness in Divine remembrance, it would have been better for one. How many words are such that even if one such word is uttered, a palace is built in the heaven as a result therein [for the one who utters them]. One who is capable of obtaining a treasure but instead starts to collect stones, what would it be called anything other than a misfortune? This is the example of a person who abandons Divine remembrance and instead, gets busy with a useless and non-beneficial act. Even though one is not committing a sin for doing that, is it a lesser loss that one did not earn a huge profit and the work one is engaged in, will not result in any benefit? Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:



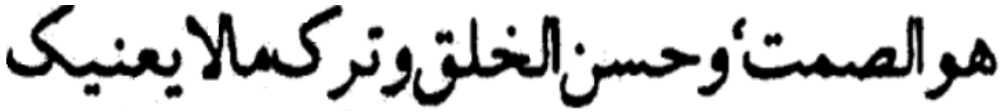
"A believer's silence is contemplation, sight is deriving lessons, and speech is Divine remembrance."

The real asset of an individual is the time. If one used the time in useless endeavors and did not save this asset as a reservoir for the Hereafter, then what would one attain other than a loss? Hence, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:



"It is the indication of the beauty of one's Islam to abandon what is useless." (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Tirmidhi* and *Ibn Majah* on the authority of prophetic companion Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him])

One who does useless things will not be able to avoid the accountability on the Day of Judgment which is also a form of punishment. Abu Dhar (May God be pleased with him) narrated that Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) asked him: "Should I not tell you about a deed that is light on the body and heavy in the scales of Day of Judgment?" He replied: "O Messenger of God! Yes, please tell us". He replied:



"That [deed] is silence, good morals, manners and inner disposition, and abandoning the useless [action or speech]." (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Ibn Abi ad-Dunya*)

Ibn Abbas (May God be pleased with him), a prophetic companion, said: "There are five things that I love the most: One is to not do useless and non-beneficial talk because it is unneeded and extra and there is always a danger of sin in it. Second is that even if someone does beneficial talk, one should first see if there is an occasion for even a beneficial talk or not, because sometimes even a beneficial talk done without the occasion and opportunity can be a source of anguish. Third is that one should not argue with either a tolerant or foolish person, because to argue with a tolerant person is to make one angry and to argue with a foolish person is to subject oneself to pain. Fourth is that one should mention one's brother in a way one wants to be mentioned oneself. Fifth is no matter what one does, it should be done with the certitude that if this action is good, it will be rewarded but if it's bad and evil, it will result in punishment [in the Hereafter]". Useless talk is done for many reasons. Sometimes, speaker has the greed to ask unnecessary things, sometimes one has the habit of spreading things or one wants to attract the listener towards oneself. Sometimes one is in love with the listener and prolonging the conversation is done to keep the listener inclined towards oneself for a long time. Sometimes, stories [about different people] are told as a pastime. The cure for all this is to consider death in front of one and to think that I will be held accountable for every spoken word. My breaths are my assets and tongue is my net [for catching something precious in terms of other worldly benefits]. To waste one's asset and leave the net unused [or used in wrong things] is not intelligent. This is the knowledge-based cure of useless talk. The practical cure of it is to adopt solitude or stop one's tongue sometimes even from beneficial matters so that it gets used to not saying useless things.

Second Harm – Excessive Talk: Excessive talk is also an undesirable act. It includes useless talk as well as the beneficial talk that exceeds the bounds of necessity. Beneficial speech can be brief. A person who has the ability to be brief but still uses two words as opposed to one, will be considered an excessive talker even though it is meant as a [public] speech or emphasis, even though there is no sin in it. Ata ibn Abi-Rabah (May God have mercy upon him – a saint and Gnostic) said: "There had been people before you who hated useless talk. To them, other than a talk related to the book of God, the way of the Prophet, exhorting right and forbidding evil, and for most important worldly needs, they considered every other talk excessive". It is difficult to tell which talk, or conversation is excessive, and which one is unnecessary as there is no limit for it. However, Qur'an has provided a limit for beneficial and necessary talk as God says:

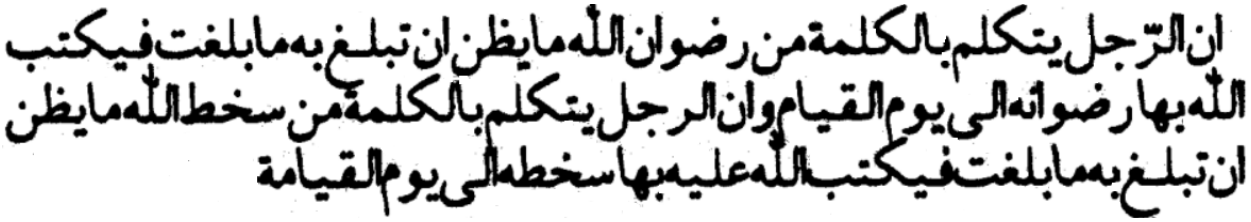
لَّا خَيْرَ فِي كَثِيرٍ مِّن نَّجْوَىٰهُمْ إِلَّا مَنْ أَمَرَ بِصَدَقَةٍ أَوْ مَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ إِصْلَاحٍ بَيْنَ ٱلنَّاسِ

"Most of the discussions of ordinary people do not have any good in them. However, there are some who persuade others to give charity, or to do some righteous deeds or bring about mutual reconciliation and reformation between people." (Qur'an, Chapter 4, Verse 114)

Even when praising someone with thousand precautions, some words do come out of the mouth that are against the facts and are exaggerated. Even if the praise is factual, there is a danger that Satan may cause one to say unnecessary things. Mujahid (May God have mercy upon him) said: "Every [single] word uttered by a human being is written down and recorded to the extent a father tells his son that he would buy a certain thing for him and it was not his intension to really do so, it would be recorded as a lie for him". Hasan al-Basri (May God have mercy upon him) said: "O human being! Your register of deeds is spread open and two angels have been appointed to write down your deeds on it. It now depends on your desire what you want to do, whether you do more or less, every deed of yours will be recorded and on the Day of Judgment, this register of deeds will be a great evidence, either in your favor or against you". According to a tradition, Prophet Solomon (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) sent one of his *Jinns* somewhere and sent a few other *Jinns* behind him so they could inform him of where he went and what he did. They came back and told him that he went to a marketplace and after getting there, he looked towards the sky then at the human beings down below. He then shook his head and proceeded forward. Prophet Solomon was surprised at this and asked him about it. He replied: "I was surprised at the angels how quickly they were writing down deeds of human beings while sitting on their heads and then I was surprised at how quickly humans get misguided [into error]". Ibrahim Tayyami (May God have mercy upon him) said: "A believer sees before speaking if it is beneficial or harmful for one. One speaks only if it's beneficial otherwise stays quiet, and a person inclined to evil and sin speaks without thinking". It was said by a wise: "If one likes to talk in a gathering then one should adopt silence and if one likes to be silent then one should talk". Zaid ibn Abi Habib (May God have mercy upon

him) said: “The trial for a scholar is in talking compared to listening as one is liable to the dangers of omission [of truth], persuasion [with self interest in mind], and decoration (embellishment) of one’s speech”. Ibrahim bin Adham (May God have mercy upon him) said: “A human being gets destroyed by the excess of wealth and speech”.

Third Harm – Mentioning of Wrong: Wrong is referred to as a talk that is related to sin. For example, [the talk and conversation about] the beauty and physical characteristics of the opposite gender, telling romantic stories, describing the gatherings of sins, the excessiveness of the wealthy, the bad deeds of the rulers, all these matters are wrong and indulgence in them is forbidden (*Haram*). Unnecessary talk is not forbidden [in the Divine law], it’s only disliked and not recommended, likewise excessive talk is also not forbidden, it’s disliked, however, evil talk comes under the purview of prohibition. It can be said, however, that one who speaks a lot about unnecessary topics is close to getting indulged in wrong talk [hence, it’s better to avoid it]. Entertainment talk nowadays is a special hobby and people arrange special gatherings for that. The topics of these gatherings is something wrong, someone is ridiculed, someone’s faults are exposed, someone’s faults are searched, someone gets conspired against, etc. In fact, no such gathering is devoid of sin. These are so many different kinds of sins that it is not easy to enumerate them. The way to get rid of them is to limit oneself to religious [and spiritual struggle related] matters and necessary worldly needs in one’s talks and conversations. Mentioning of evil matters is a dangerous proposition and one getting accustomed to it, gets destroyed [spiritually with repercussions on one’s material and outer life as well], even though one may think of it as trivial and not realize and comprehend its dangers. However, on the Day of Judgment, it will be revealed that the sin one deemed as trivial, has brought so much destruction to one. Bilal bin al-Harth (May God be pleased with him), narrated from Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him):

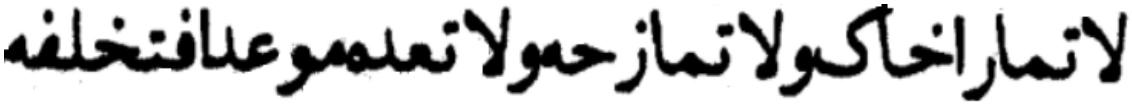


“A man says a word that is pleasing to God and thinks that there he may not have received any significant Divine approval from that; however, God has written His Divine approval for that word until the Day of Judgment. Sometimes, a man says a word that is displeasing to God and thinks that He would not be displeased with that but due to that one word, God writes His Divine displeasure until the Day of Judgment.” (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Ibn Majah* and *Tirmidhi*)

The evil and wrong talk is a separate type from backbiting, tale-bearing, and fault-finding and it deals with mentioning prohibited matters and there is no religious need for

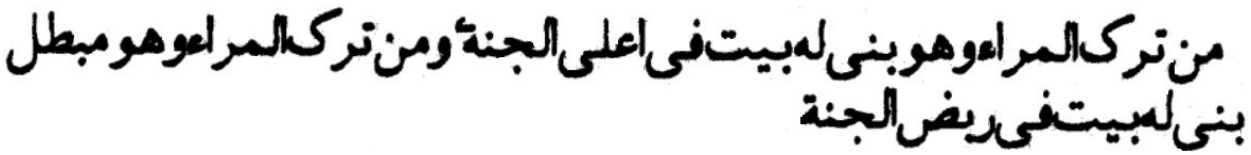
doing so. It includes mentioning of innovations [in religious matters], mentioning of deviant ideologies and even the mentioning of mutual differences between prophetic companions [which is done to sow discord and promote sectarianism].

Fourth Harm – Cutting People's Conversations and Disputing: Cutting people off when they are talking is forbidden. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:



"Do not cuff off your brother [when he is talking], do not make an impolite joke with him and do not make a promise that you cannot keep." (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Tirmidhi* on the authority of prophetic companion Abdullah Ibn Abbas [May God be pleased with him])

"Stop cutting conversations because there is no wisdom in it that can be understood, nor can one stay away from its harms." (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Tabarani* on the authority of prophetic companion Abu Darda [May God be pleased with him])



"One who leaves cutting off people's conversations while being right (or on the side of the truth), a home will be built on the highest level of heaven for such a one; and one who leaves cutting off people's conversations while being wrong (or on the side of falsehood), a home will be built in the middle of the heaven for such a one".

It has been said that nations have been misguided after receiving the light of [Divine] guidance due to disputing [and argumentations]. Anas bin Malik (May God be pleased with him) said: "Cutting off conversations and disputing with people causes hardness of the heart and seeds of enmity is placed in the hearts because of that". Bilal bin Sa'ad (May God be pleased with him) said: "When you see someone self-opinionated, quarrelsome and insistent on one's opinion, then know that such a person is destined for the loss of the Hereafter". Abu al-Darda (May God be pleased with him) said: "Always fighting or disputing with people is enough for such a one to be a sinner". Umar (May God be pleased with him) said: "Do not acquire knowledge for three things nor prevent yourselves from gaining knowledge due to three things. The three things for

which one should not acquire knowledge are disputations (and argumentations with people), pride and show off. Three things for which one should not stop from gaining knowledge are shyness in seeking knowledge, abstinence from gaining knowledge, and satisfaction with ignorance". Jesus Christ (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said: "One who lies a lot, finds one's beauty coming to an end, one who argues a lot with people finds one's dignity getting hurt, one who worries a lot gets sick, one whose morals and manners are bad, gets oneself involved in Divine punishment".

Definition of Cutting People Off: Its definition is to find fault in someone's conversation and objecting to it on that basis, whether this fault is in words, meaning or intention. In this regard, it should be kept in mind that whatever conversation you hear, if it's truth then attest to its truth and if wrong then stay quiet, provided it's not about religious matters. Faults are found in words by telling the speaker that the words are against grammatical rules and correct sequence of words is not followed in the delivery of words. Such mistakes in words happen due to various reasons. Sometimes, people are not well familiar with the language, sometimes people want to say one thing but something else comes out of the mouth; whatever the reason for mistake in words is, there is no justification for criticism. Meaning of words becomes a target of objection by saying: "You have said such and such wrong thing, you have made a mistake in such and such opinion, your thought or opinion is not right", etc. Intention is criticized by saying: "This thing that you are saying, although is based on facts, but your intention is not the expression of facts, rather it's something else". On all such occasions, it's mandatory to stay silent. However, if the purpose of questioning is acquisition of knowledge and benefit, and not enmity and finding an opportunity to criticize, then there is nothing wrong with it. The purpose of argumentation is to silence the opponent, to announce his or her ignorance, faults, and shortcomings so that one gets humiliated and people ridicule such a one. The indication [of such nefarious purpose] is that if objection is for the sake of truth, then instead of using some other suitable method, one adopts a method that is insulting to the opponent and one's own superiority is expressed over one.

The Method of Staying Away from Disputes and Cutting Off Conversations: The way to protect oneself from both, is to stay silent even in permissible matters. These two evils are born because of one's purpose to denigrate the opponent and establish one's own superiority. These are two such lusts of the lower self that are hard to control. The expression of one's superiority belongs to the category of self-righteousness which in turn is a reaction of considering oneself high and great. However, mightiness and greatness are God's attributes only and suits Him alone. Similarly, to consider someone faulty and lowly is an indication of [one having] animalistic temperament because a wild beast likes to tear apart and injure another. These two evil qualities are extremely condemnable and harmful. Disputing and cutting off conversations fuel these [vile and negative] qualities [of considering others faulty and lowly]. One who continues to indulge in disputed arguments and criticisms will continue to provide nourishment for growth to these two destructive inner qualities. Disputes and

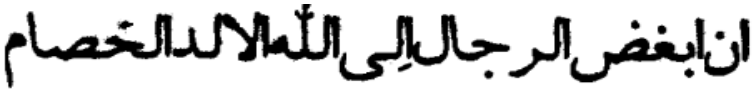
cutting people's conversations both exceed the bounds of abominations, rather they are both sins if others are hurt because of that. As far as disputed argumentations and criticisms are concerned, no one can say that they don't cause pain. One who is argued with, gets enraged and tries to respond in kind and they both start fighting like dogs. Each one of them wants to harm and humiliate the other to such an extent that one will not even be able to lift the head or to give such a response that people become convinced about the lack of intellect in the opponent. This is a disease and its cure is to eradicate the arrogance that leads one to having a superiority complex, and also the audacity to express it and similarly, this bestial sentiment can be crushed that provokes one into looking down at others.

The details of its cure will be explained in the chapter on condemnation of arrogance and self-conceitedness (Chapter 10). Here, only this much will be said that curing any disease will happen by removing the reasons of that disease. The reasons for cutting off people's conversations and disputing are arrogance, pride, and bestial qualities. Unless these causes are removed, the disease will not go away. When something is done continuously, it becomes a habit and second nature, and it becomes difficult to get rid of it. Imam Abu Hanifa (May God have mercy upon him) asked Dawud al-Tai (May God have mercy upon him) for his reason for seclusion and solitude. He replied: "I remain in solitude so I can do the struggle of not fighting with others". Imam Abu Hanifa said: "This is not a spiritual struggle, instead it is to go to people's gatherings, listen to them and staying silent". Dawud al-Tai said that he acted upon it and felt that there can be no other spiritual striving harder than this. This is also the reality as listening to someone saying wrong thing and staying quiet is very difficult particularly in the case when one is able to correct one's mistake. That's why, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) gave glad tidings of Heaven to the person, who being on the right and truth still does not cut people's conversations because knowing the truth and the right, staying silent on a wrong thing is very difficult on the self. Especially, the desire to express the right thing is predominant in matters related to religions and beliefs. Argumentations is already a part of one's temperament and when one thinks that there is reward from God in showing the right beliefs, then the heart becomes greedy of that Divine reward and recompense. In this way, both the Divine law and one's temperament, aid with these disputed argumentations. However, to think that these debates and argumentations are source of Divine rewards is a mistake in itself.

It is better for a human being to desist from saying anything to fellow co-religionists; if one finds someone involved in innovations [in religious matters also known as *Bid'a*], then one should admonish such a person in private [as opposed to doing it in public that leads to indignation and stubbornness]. One will take public debates as a norm thinking that people of all faiths and beliefs do these to prove the veracity of their respective faiths and consider their success in silencing their opponents. This will firmly ingrain the innovation [in religious matters] in one's heart [as opposed to giving it up]. If one sees that advice is not having the desired effect on the heart of one involved in innovation [in matters of faith] and there is no capacity left in such a person to accept the truth, then

one should get busy in [the reformation of] one's own self and leave the other person alone. One who is accustomed to debating, and people praise and view such a one with respect and honor, then these destructive inner qualities get firmly ingrained and strengthened in one's heart and it becomes very difficult to get rid of them. Hence, if in someone's heart, the inner vices like anger, arrogance, showing off, self-righteousness and desire for domination accumulate, it becomes very difficult to struggle against them [to root them out]. It is difficult to struggle against one such quality, it can be imagined, how much more difficult it would be to have to struggle against all of them together.

Fifth Harm – Hostility and Animosity: This is also a condemnable [inner] trait. Hostility and animosity also have dispute in them, but its purpose is to usurp someone's property or right. Traditions have expressed condemnation of this vile inner trait or quality. Aisha (May God be pleased with her) narrates the following from Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him):



"In God's sight, the worst among people is the one who is quarrelsome and prone to hostilities and animosities." (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Sahih Bukhari*)

One sage said: "Avoid hostilities and animosities as they destroy one's path to God (*Deen*)". It is said that God-fearing and pious do not quarrel with others. Bashar ibn Abdullah (May God have mercy upon him) said: "There is nothing worse than hostilities and animosities. It destroys one's faith and path to God, blemishes one's decency and dignity, ends the joy of life, and heart instead of engaging in Divine remembrance and contemplation, gets entrapped in the worries of hostilities and animosities". It can be said here that if someone has a right due to another who is not willing to give it, then one should strive to get it. The condemnable dispute or hostility is the one that is based on falsehood or done without knowledge, for example, a lawyer starts to support a party without knowing where the truth is. Similarly, that dispute or hostility is also condemnable in which one's legitimate right is demanded but one does not settle on that, but displays maximum enmity and animosity as the purpose is not the attainment of one's right, but instead to harm the opponent. That dispute or hostility is also condemnable that involves using hurtful words even though they are not needed to express one's right and to strengthen one's argument. That dispute or hostility is also condemnable that is ostensibly for gaining one's right but in reality, its purpose is the humiliation and insult of the opponent, and its driving force is grudge and enmity. All acts of dispute or hostility like that are condemnable. If the oppressed articulates one's claim according to the way of the Divine law without having any enmity, exaggeration, rancor, and desire to harm, then this is not forbidden if there is no other way of obtaining one's right. If one is able to obtain one's rights without disputing, then it's better for one

to not go that route. It is because in disputing, it is difficult to keep the tongue in the bounds of moderation. Furthermore, disputing engenders rancor in the heart and the fire of anger intensifies and when one is angry, one cannot be expected to adhere to the Divine law. A stage comes during dispute, when its reason disappears from the heart, and the only objective left in the heart of the claimant is to defeat the opponent, and to employ every possible means and tactics to achieve that. They are happy with causing pain to one another and to shatter the dignity of each other. The one who starts the dispute is the one who commits all of these offenses. If one exercises great deal of caution, it's possible to stay away from these offenses, however, it will be very difficult to keep the heart peaceful. As long as the dispute lasts, heart will be worried to the extent that even during prayers [to God], one will think about subjugating the opponent somehow. Dispute instigates turmoil and evil. Same is the state of disputations and argumentations as both engender evil. It's better to close the doors of evil so that both the tongue and the heart remain protected from the repercussions and influences of disputes and this is a difficult matter.

The least evil of disputing, disputations and argumentations is that the tradition of talking to each other nicely comes to an end, even though, beauty of conversing with each other is an important element of beautiful co-existence and is worthy of Divine recompense. God says in Qur'an:

وَقُولُواْ لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا

"And talk to [all the] people in a beautiful way." (Qur'an, Chapter 2, Verse 83)

Abdullah bin Abbas (May God be pleased with him) said: "If anyone from God's creations offer you greetings and salutations (*Salaam*) you should also say the greetings and salutations in return to the one even though one may be a Magian. It is because God says in Qur'an:

وَإِذَا حُيِّيتُم بِتَحِيَّةٍ فَحَيُّواْ بِأَحْسَنَ مِنْهَآ

'When someone greets you with greetings and salutations then you should [also] return the greetings and salutations in even better words.'" (Qur'an, Chapter 4, Verse 86)

Abdullah bin Abbas (May God be pleased with him) also said: "Even if Pharaoh says something good to me, I will also reply to him with something good".

Anas bin Malik (May God be pleased with him) narrates from Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) that he said:

ان فی الجنۃ لغرفا یری ظاھرھا من باطنھا وباطنھا من ظاھرھا اعدھا اللہ تعالی لمن اطعم الطعام والان الکلام

"There are such residences in Heaven in which the view of inside from outside and the view of outside from inside is seen very clearly. God has prepared such homes for

those who serve food [to all especially to those who are in need] and adopt softness in their conversations [with all the people]." (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Tirmidhi*)

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) also said:

الكلمة الطيّبة صدقة

"[Saying] A good word is charity [in the Way of God]." (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of prophetic companion Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him])

One should not exercise stinginess in having a good conversation [with others]. Perhaps, God may bestow Divine recompense for doing that. All this discussion has been about having a beautiful speech and conversation [with all people] which is the opposite of fighting, disputation, and argumentation and all the talk in the category of these three is disliked, painful, and inciting. May God enable us to treat people with good conversations and staying away from evil conversations.

Sixth Harm – Ornamentation and Artificiality in Speech: Many aspirants of public speaking have the habit of embellishing their talk. They engineer long introductions and beginnings and embellish them with rhymes and big words. This artificiality and ornamentation are condemnable. One prophetic narration of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) says:

انا واتقياء امتي براء من التكلّف

"Me and the God-fearing of my nation are remote from artificiality and ornamentation [in speech]."

In another tradition he said:

ان ابغضكم الي وابعدكم مني مجلسا الثرثارون المتفيهقون المتشدقون في الكلام

"From amongst you, the worst and remotest from me (the prophetic way) are those who are frivolous talkers, excessive talkers and adopters of ornamentation [and artificiality] in speech." (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Musnad Ahmed* and *Tirmidhi* on the authority of prophetic companion Abu Tha'laba [May God be pleased with him])

Fatima (May God be pleased with her – the daughter of the Prophet) said that Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

شرار امتي الذين غنو بالنعيم يأكلون الوان الطعام ويلبسون الوان الثياب و يتشدقون في الكلام

"The worst people among my nation [or followers] (*Ummah*) are those who got raised up in comfort and opulence, eat all types of food, dress up in all types of dresses (being an indication of their indulgence in conspicuous consumption), and adopt ornamentation and artificiality in conversations". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Ibn Abi ad-Dunya* and *Bayhaqi fi al-Shu'ab*)

Once he said and repeated it three times:

واهلك المتنطعون

"Beware! Exaggerators are ruined." (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of prophetic companion Abdullah ibn Mas'ud [May God be pleased with him])

A conversation should be such that the listener would understand it. The purpose of conversation and speech is to make others understand it, anything else is useless and is included in artificiality and unnaturalness that Divine law has condemned and the likes of it. However, the rhyming that is common in religious sermons is exempt from it on the condition that there is no excess and exaggeration in it. The purpose of preacher from sermonizing and admonition is that the listeners will get ignited in their hearts, the incentive and desire to do righteous deeds. In this connection, the effect of words cannot be denied. However, in general conversations, there is no need for weight [in words], rhyme, allusion, or connotation. That's why, to adopt the sermon style in day-to-day conversations is utter ignorance. The catalyst of this artificiality and unnaturalness is show off (*Riya*), and the person involved in this calamity wants people to get impressed with one's oratory and eloquence, and to express their admiration for such a one.

Seventh Harm – Lewdness, Vulgarity and Obscene Cursing: This is also condemned and forbidden [in the Divine law]. The origin of lewdness and obscenities is the inner evil and lowliness [of inner disposition]. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

اياكم والفحش فان الله تعالى لا يحب الفحش ولا التفحش

"Protect yourselves from lewdness and vulgarity. No doubt God does not like lewdness, vulgarity and obscenity." (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Nasa'i* and *Hakim* on the authority of prophetic companion Abdullah bin Umar [May God be pleased with him])

In another tradition he said:

ليس المؤمن بالطعان ولا اللعان ولا الفاحش ولا البذى

“Fault finder, doer of damnation, lewd and obscene talker, and excessive talker cannot be a believer.” (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Tirmidhi* on the authority of prophetic companion Abdullah bin Mas’ud [May God be pleased with him])

Prophet Muhammed (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) also said:

الجنة حرام على كل فاحش يدخلها

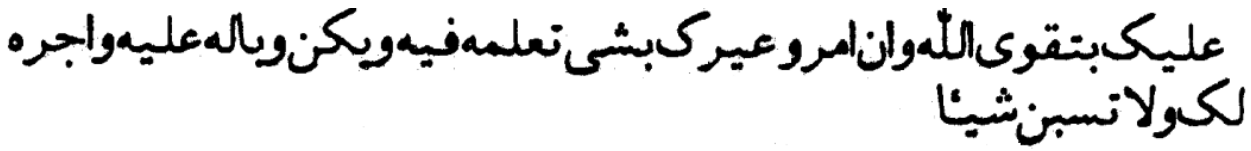
“Every lewd talker has been forbidden entry into Heaven”. (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Ibn Abi ad-Dunya* on the authority of prophetic companion Abdullah bin Umar [May God be pleased with him])

Ahnaf bin Qais (May God have mercy upon him) said: “Should I not inform you about a lethal disease? It is lewdness and bad manners, morals and inner disposition”.

To mention shameful matters in explicit terms is lewdness and vulgarity. For example, taking the names of private parts and describing matters related to copulation. People who possess bad character and are inclined to sowing turmoil [even if it’s in matters related to morality, civility and common human decencies], have developed explicit and lewd expressions related to that and use them without any hesitation and shame, whereas the pious and good-natured people guard themselves from using such expressions. Instead, in such matters [that need to be mentioned due to a valid need], they talk in innuendos and vague terms. Abdullah bin Abbas (May God be pleased with him) said: “God possesses shyness. He is benevolent, He forgives sins and mentions [things that are explicit in nature] in innuendos”. Therefore, Qur’an connotes touch with copulation. Words like “coming to”, “touch” and “companionship” are innuendos for copulation [that have been used in Qur’an describing rules related to marital relations]. There is no lewdness and obscenity in them.

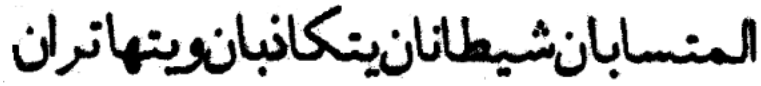
People have not restrained themselves to “copulation”, instead, to interpret and connote it, they have invented expressions and words that makes one ashamed just listening to them causing a feeling of repulsion and repugnance. Some of these words are less vulgar than others. In this connection, habits differ for every country and area. In any case, lesser degree of vulgar and obscene words are disliked (*Makruh*) and of extreme degree are forbidden (*Haram*). The words in between the two degrees are not devoid of doubt [in terms of them being disliked or forbidden in the Sacred law]. These words are not exclusively related to copulation but people of bad nature utter obscenities even in words not related to it. Words related to human waste are of this nature and should not be used explicitly. Similarly, if someone has a defect, for example, leprosy, skin disorder, etc., or some disease then it should not be mentioned explicitly but rather through innuendo, for example, such and such person has a serious condition or illness.

Mentioning the disease explicitly is obscene [especially when the one suffering from it, does not like to disclose or mention it] and is included among the harms of the tongue. The catalyst for obscene and vulgar talk is both the habit [ingrained in one's heart after practicing it for long] and the company of the people of sin and immorality who are accustomed to lewdness and vulgarity. Once a Bedouin came to Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) and asked for some advice who replied:



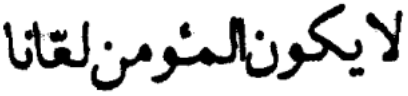
"Continue to have pious awe, reverence and fear of God. If someone notices something [bad] in you and excoriates you, then you should not excoriate one in return after seeing something [bad] in such a one. [If you act in this way] The onus will remain on such a one and you will get Divine reward [for your patience, restraint and not retaliating in kind], neither should you curse anything [or anyone]." (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Ibn Ahmad* and *Tabarani* on the authority of prophetic companion Abu Jari an-Najeemi [May God be pleased with him])

The Bedouin said: "After this advice, I never called anything bad". Ayadh bin Hamar (May God be pleased with him) asked: "O Prophet of God! A person who is lower in rank than me [in social stratification] and curses me, is there any harm if I retaliate against such a one". Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) replied:



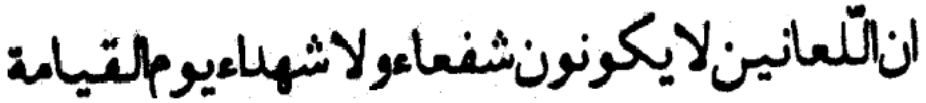
"Both abusers [one who initiates the abuse and the second one who retaliates in kind] are two devils who falsify and refute each other and engineer calumny against each other". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Abu Dawud Tayalisi* and *Musnad Ahmad*)

Eighth Harm – Wishing Disseverance of Divine Mercy (*La'na*): Wishing disseverance from Divine mercy (*La'na*) [consequence of which is the downpouring of calamities from all sides] whether it's for a human being, animal or stone is condemnable. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:



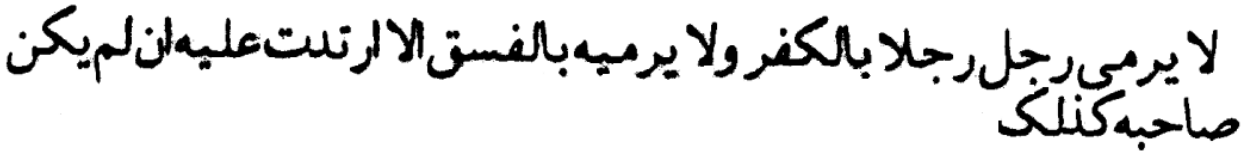
"A believer is not someone who practices *La'na* (wishes disseverance from Divine mercy)." (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Tirmidhi* on the authority of prophetic companion Abdullah bin Umar [May God be pleased with him])

Hudhaifa (May God be pleased with him) said: “A nation that wished disseverance from Divine Mercy among each other became deserving of Divine retribution”. In one tradition, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:



“Those who [habitually] wish [others] disseverance from Divine mercy will neither be intercessors nor witnesses on the Day of Judgment”. (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of prophetic companion Abu al-Darda [May God be pleased with him])

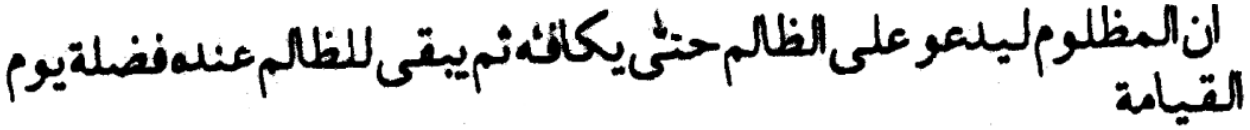
The meaning of *La'na* is to remove and distance one from God. Using this word would be right with someone who has the qualities that distances one from God like disbelief and oppression. In that case, it would be permissible to say: “May the curse (*La'na*) of God be upon the oppressors”, “May the curse of God be upon those who reject truth [and take the side of falsehood]”, etc. There is a danger in wishing someone being removed or distanced from Divine mercy. This is a sensitive state and to assert that God has deprived someone of His closeness, is a matter from the hidden realm of which no one is aware of other than God, or if God informs His Prophet [Muhammad] (Peace and blessings of God be upon him), then he can be aware too. Those qualities that engender distancing and deprivation from Divine mercy are three: disbelief (*Kufr*), innovation (digression) in established religious principles and teaching (*Bid'a*), and blatant sin (*Fisq*). It is not permissible to wish a specific sinner deprivation from Divine mercy as there is a great turmoil and danger in it. It is better to wish Satan deprivation from Divine mercy after seeing someone indulged in sin because Satan is the one that incites people to evil and there is no harm in cursing him. Attributing disbelief (*Kufr*) and blatant sin (*Fisq*) to a Muslim without proper investigation is incorrect as Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:



“If one accuses someone of unbelief and that person is not like that, then this accusation of unbelief and sin will return back to the accuser”. (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of prophetic companion Abu Dharr [May God be pleased with him])

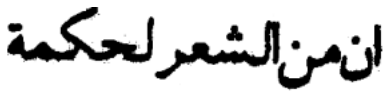
Abdullah bin Umar (May God be pleased with him) said: “God strongly dislikes a person who habitually curses people in abundance”. Invoking and supplicating God to cause harm, is close to wishing disseverance of Divine Mercy (*La’na*). It is also not good to say about an oppressor that God makes such a one sick or not grant health from illness

or cause such a one to die, etc. A *Hadith* [tradition of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)] says:



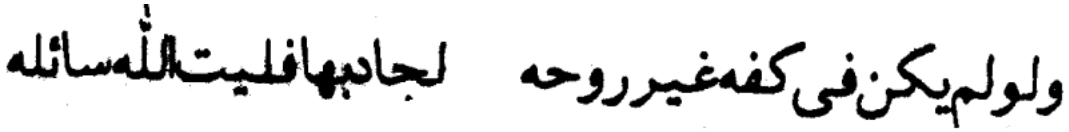
“An oppressed person takes one’s revenge by doing a supplication to harm the oppressor. Then only what’s in excess [of the harm happened to the oppressor resulting from such a supplication of the oppressed] is left for the oppressor on the Day of Judgment”.

Ninth Harm – Music and Poetry: This topic has been thoroughly discussed in the Book of Devotional Recitals and Spiritual Ecstasy (*Kitab Adab us-Sama' wa al-Wajd* - Ghazali’s eighth book in the second volume or quarter of his magnum opus “*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*” or “Revival of Knowledge of Path to God”; the first volume [about acts of Divine worship and inner wisdom behind them] and the second volume [about social dealings with fellow human beings] of Ghazali’s magnum opus have not been included in this book) that which music is permissible and which one is not. A repeat of that discussion is not needed here. As far as poetry is concerned, good [purposeful and instructive] poetry is good and bad poetry [inciting people to wrong and indecencies] is bad. However, dedicating oneself to poetry and making it a hobby is not good. One Gnostic was asked about a verse of poetry to which he replied: “Leave poetry and engage in Divine remembrance (*Dhikr*)”. Nevertheless, it is not forbidden (*Haram*) to say or make verses of poetry. However, the condition is that it should not have anything that exceeds the limits of the Divine law. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:



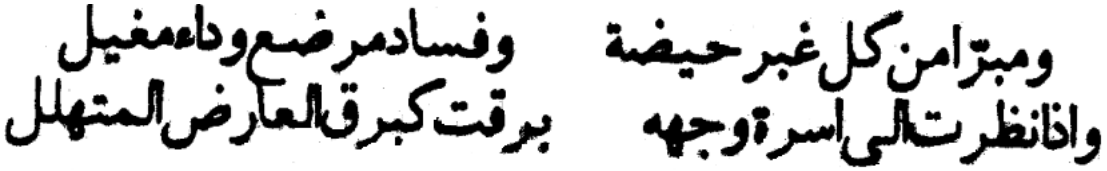
“No doubt, some verses of poetry are replete with wisdom”.

Verses of poetry usually consist of topics of praise and condemnation. There is a great room for lies in them. However, neither outright condemnation is disliked nor the outright praise. Some exaggeration can be done in praise as there is some laxity in that. For example, these types of verses of poetry can be called forbidden (*Haram*) due to some mingling of lie in them:



“If he didn’t have anything other than a soul, he would have spent even that. The one who asks, should also fear God [for what one is asking]”.

If the one praised in this verse of poetry, is not generous then this verse is just an utter lie [which is prohibited by the Divine law]. However, if the praised is in reality generous, this exaggeration will be permissible and termed as the beauty of the poetic verse because the purpose [of this exaggeration] is not the reality but to express the extreme generosity of the praised. Such verses of poetry that have this level of exaggeration were recited before Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) numerous times but he did not prohibit them. Aisha (May God be pleased with her - the wife of the Prophet) narrates: "Once she was spinning the wheel (a small, portable, hand-cranked wheel used for spinning cotton and other fibers) and Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) was sewing his shoes [to repair as he was an embodiment of extreme poverty]. I lifted my eyes to look at him and saw drops of sweat on his forehead glittering and shining in the sun light as stars [in the sky]. I was amazed and dumbfounded by such a beautiful sight. He saw me looking at him in amazement so he asked: 'O Aisha! Why are you looking so surprised?' I said: 'O Prophet of God! The drops of sweat on your forehead are glittering like stars. If Bu Kabeer Hudhli (a famous Arab poet from the era before the Prophet) had seen you, he would have called you the manifestation of his verses of poetry'. Prophet (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) asked: 'What does Bu Kabeer Hudhli say?' I told him the following two verses [of poetry from Bu Kabeer Hudhli]:



The praised one is free of the impurity of menses, weakness of nursing and decadence of all illnesses.

When I look at the finer details on the face of such a one, they dazzle like lightening in the clouds.

When Prophet (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) heard these poetic verses, he left his work and kissed my forehead and said:

'May God grant you a good recompense O Aisha! You may never have been so pleased with me as I am pleased with you at this moment'". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Bayhaqi Dalail al-Nabuwwa*)

Tenth Harm – Humor: This is also prohibited and disliked but there is no harm if it's in small amount. Prophet Muhammed (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

لاتمار اخاک ولا تمازحه

"Do not cut off your brother's conversation and do not joke with him". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Tirmidhi*)

In this respect, it can be objected that the reason for prohibition of cutting off conversations and interjecting makes sense as that in fact, includes insult to the one conversing and getting one discomforted, however, there is no insult and discomfort for anyone in humor and it's an indication of good-heartedness and good pastime. Why is it being prohibited then? The answer is that excess in pastimes and persevering in them is also prohibited [as it leads to heedlessness towards one's purpose in life and dissuasion from it]. The meaning of perseverance is that the heart is forever absorbed in sport and humor. Sport is permissible but to persevere in it is prohibited. Excess and exaggeration in it, causes an increase in laughter and excess laughter causes death of the heart and one's dignified awe comes to an end [as a result thereof]. Sometimes, enmity is born in the hearts because of it. If laughter is devoid of these blemishes, then it is not a bad thing. Hence, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

انی لامازح ولا اقول الا حقا

"I have humor, however, there is nothing in it other than the truth".

It was his distinction that even at the occasions of good humor and pastime, he uttered only the truth from his tongue. Other people, no matter how great their degrees of abstinence from worldliness (*Zuhd*) and their God-fear (*Taqwa*), are incapable of protecting themselves from lie when they step into humor. Their aim is to make people laugh, no matter how that is done. Umar (May God be pleased with him) said: "One who laughs more, loses one's dignified awe (*Haiba*); one who indulges in humor, loses one's respect in people's hearts; one who does something a lot, gets recognized with that; one who talks a lot, often makes mistakes; one who makes more mistakes, loses shyness and modesty (*Haya*); one who loses shyness and modesty, caused the death of one's heart; additionally, excess laughter is indicative of heedlessness from the Hereafter". Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

لو تعلمون ما اعلم لبكيتم كثيرا ولضحكتم قليلا

"If you know what I know, you will weep more and laugh less". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of prophetic companion Anas bin Malik [May God be pleased with him]) [He said this because as a consummate intimate of God, the Divine Gnosis, Divine Presence and related Divinely revealed matters, weighed heavily on his soul, leaving no room for

humor. It was, however, his distinction that even with momentous matters weighing heavily on his inner being, he managed to laugh at times and outwardly maintain a sense of human normalcy for the benefit of fellow human beings to continue to light up the Divine path for them.]

Atta al-Sulami (May God have mercy upon him) spent forty years of his life without laughing. Wuhaib ibn al-Ward (May God have mercy upon him) saw some people laughing at *Eid* (a day of celebration and thanksgiving after the month of fasting) and said: "If God has forgiven them then this is not the way of those who are grateful to God and if they have not been Divinely forgiven then this is not the way of those who have pious awe, reverence and fear of God". Abdullah bin Abbas (May God be pleased with him - a Prophetic companion) said: "The person who laughs after committing sin will enter into Hell weeping". It is necessary to mention here that the laughter that is undesirable has voice in it. Smile [that is not accompanied with voice] is not undesirable or prohibited. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) used to smile like that. Qasim Maula Mu'awiya narrates that a Bedouin (a desert Arab) came to Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) riding a red camel and saluted him. Whenever he tried to get closer to the Prophet to ask him something, the camel used to get agitated and take him away [to some distance]. The prophetic companions [who were with him] kept laughing while seeing this. In the end, the Bedouin could not control the camel and fell off from it and died. The companions said: "The camel has caused its rider to fell off and get killed". The Prophet (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said: "He has died but your mouths are filled with his blood". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Ibn al-Mubarak fi az-Zuhd*)

Laughter that harms one's dignified aura and awe is prohibited. Umar (May God be pleased with him) said: "One who laughs [a lot] becomes light [in stature and dignity]". Sa'ad bin al-'Aas (May God be pleased with him) advising his son said: "O son! Do not joke with a dignified man, he will become disgusted with you; nor should you joke with a low [in character traits] and vile man as he will become emboldened and audacious upon you". Umar bin Abdul-Aziz (May God have mercy upon him) said: "Fear God and avoid humor because humor engenders acrimony in the hearts and leads towards evil. Make Qur'an the topic of your discussions and establish gatherings for it. If this weighs heavily on you then have good conversations and mention good people". Umar (May God be pleased with him) asked people: "Do you know why humor (*Mizah*) is called humor?" They replied in negative. He said: "It has come from [the root word] '*Azah*' that means 'to move apart and away' because one becomes remote from the truth due to it, hence it has been named 'humor' (*Mizah*)". Some Gnostics have said that everything has some fruits and the fruit of humor is enmity. Some Gnostics have said: "Intellect dissipates due to humor and one gets separated from one's friends".

Eleventh Harm – Ridicule: Ridiculing someone is also not a likeable act as it causes pain to others. God has said:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ لَا يَسۡخَرۡ قَوۡمٞ مِّن قَوۡمٍ عَسَىٰٓ أَن يَكُونُواْ خَيۡرٗا مِّنۡهُمۡ وَلَا نِسَآءٞ مِّن نِّسَآءٍ عَسَىٰٓ أَن يَكُنَّ خَيۡرٗا مِّنۡهُنَّۖ

"O you who believe! One nation (or community or a group of people) should not laugh at another nation. It may well be the case that the ones being laughed at may be better than the ones who are laughing. Nor should women laugh at other women. It may well be the case that they (who are being laughed at) may be better than them (those who are laughing)." (Qur'an, Chapter 49, Verse 11)

The meaning of ridicule is mentioning someone's faults, with the intention of insulting and demeaning someone, in such a way that listeners would laugh at the one being ridiculed. Ridicule can be done with words, gestures, innuendos and copying someone's actions. If it is done behind the back, then it's backbiting and if done in front of someone then it is ridicule and sarcasm which is not backbiting but it is not less than that either [in terms of the gravity of the offense]. Aisha (May God be pleased with her - the wife of the Prophet) said that once she mocked someone to which Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

واللہ ما احب انی حاکیت انسانا ولی کذا وکذا

"By God! I do not like to mock another human being". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Abu Dawud* and *Tirmidhi*)

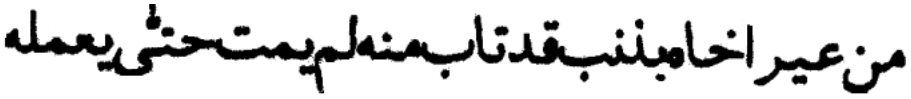
Making fun of a believer and laughing at one's fault or deformity is among the sins. In one tradition of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him), we have been informed about the final end in the afterlife of people who ridicule others as follows:

ان المستهزئين بالناس يفتح لاحدهم باب من الجنة فيقال لهم هلم فيجيئ بكربه وغمه فاذا جاء اغلق دونه ثم ليفتح له باب آخر فيقال له هلم هلم فيجيئ بكربه وغمه فاذا اتاه اغلق دونه فما يزال كذلك حتى ان الرجل ليفتح له الباب فيقال له هلم هلم فلا ياتيه

"[On the Day of Judgment] a door to Paradise will be opened for those who ridicule, and they will be told to come in. When they will reach the door with their state of misery and pain, the door will be shut for them. Then a second door will be opened, and they will be asked to come in. They will reach that door with their misery and pain, but it will be closed for them. This will continue to happen until a stage comes when they will be asked to come inside but they will not come [due to their disappointment with being

allowed to come in after doors were repeatedly shut on their faces]". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Ibn Abi ad-Dunya*)

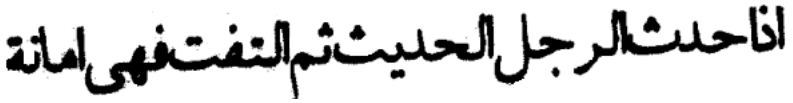
Mu'adh bin Jabal (May God be pleased with him) narrates this from the Prophet:



"One who taunts one's brother about a sin he has repented from, will not die before acting on the same sin". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Tirmidhi*)

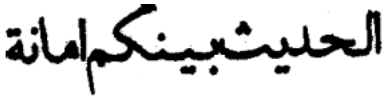
The upshot of all these [sacred] traditions is that insulting, demeaning, and ridiculing others is not permissible [in the Divine law]. The verse [of Qur'an] has even provided a reason that those whom you think as bad, could possibly be better than you. Laughing at someone is prohibited in the situation when it will cause one pain, but if one is happy at being laughed at then it is included in humor. The details about humor have been explained in previous pages. All that needs to be mentioned here is that the ridicule that is forbidden (*Haram*) is the one that causes anyone pain. For example, if during a conversation, a wrong sentence or word is uttered by someone and one laughs at it, or to mock someone's accent or conversational style, or to tell a person with bad hand-writing that such a one writes very well [in a sarcastic way], or a tall person laughing at a short one, or a big person laughing at a skinny one, or laughing at someone's loss, all such ridicules and sarcasms have been forbidden [in the sacred (Divine) law].

Twelfth Harm – Revealing Secrets and Confidential Matters: Exposing someone's secrets and confidential matters is also forbidden [in the Divine law] as it also causes pain and violation of the rights of friends and acquaintances. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:



"If a man says something and leaves then it is a trust [to be kept confidential unless he agrees to its sharing]". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Abu Dawud* and *Tirmidhi* on the authority of prophetic companion Jabir [May God be pleased with him])

Another prophetic tradition says:



"Your mutual conversations and matters [that transpire in confidence,] are a trust [to be kept confidential]". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Ibn Abi ad-Dunya*)

Hasan (May God be pleased with him) said: “Disclosing a matter of a brother (or a sister) that he wants to keep secret is dishonesty and embezzlement”. Disclosing someone’s secret is dishonesty (breach of trust) and is forbidden if it causes someone harm, and even if there is no harm to anyone, it is an indication of shallowness.

Thirteenth Harm – False Promises: It should be known that tongue is foremost in making promises, but the lower self (*Nafs*) does not adhere to them and does not become inclined to fulfill them, causing breach of promise. This is an indication of hypocrisy. God said:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ أَوۡفُواْ بِٱلۡعُقُودِۚ

“O you who believe! Fulfill your promises.” (Qur’an, Chapter 5, Verse 1)

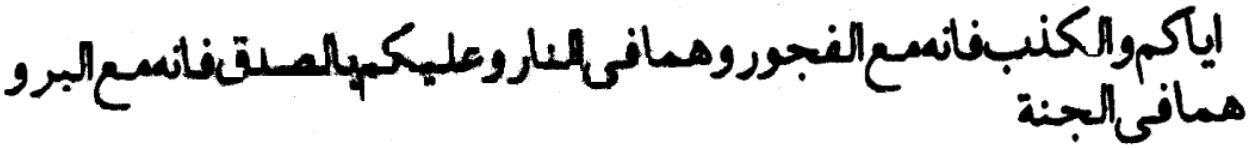
Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) termed promise as a gift. (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Tabarani Awsat* on the authority of prophetic companion Qabath bin Atheem [May God be pleased with him] besides being mentioned in some other collections). Just like a gift is not taken back, reneging on the promise is also not right. God has especially mentioned the quality of Prophet Ishmael (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) in Qur’an that he firmly abided by his promises and commitments. Abu Hurairah (May God be pleased with him) narrated that Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

ثلاث من كن فيه فهو منافق وان صام وصلى وزعم انه مسلم اذا حدث كذب و
اذا وعد اخلف، واذا ائتمن خان

“If three things exist, one becomes a hypocrite even though one fasts, prays and claims that one is a Muslim. [First is that] One lies while talking, makes promises without fulfilling them, is treacherous and dishonest when a trust is entrusted upon one”. (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Sahih Buhkari* and *Sahih Muslim*)

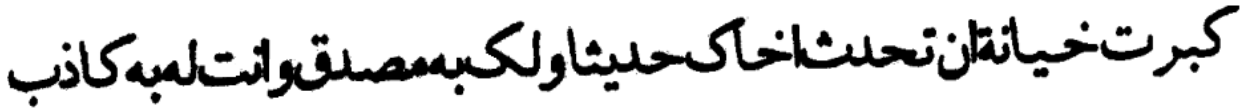
This characterization is for the person who intends to not fulfil promises after making them. One who intends to fulfill one’s promises but later some impediment comes along and as a result is not able to fulfil them, will not be entered into this characterization and will not be termed a hypocrite even though it has the form of hypocrisy. That’s why, just like it’s imperative to protect oneself from actual hypocrisy, it is necessary to avoid even the semblance and trace of hypocrisy. Without any [lawful] need, one should not excuse one’s own self from fulfilling promises.

Fourteenth Harm – Lying and Swearing: This is also the worst fault and a great sin. Abu Bakr (May God be pleased with him) narrates a tradition from Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) who said:



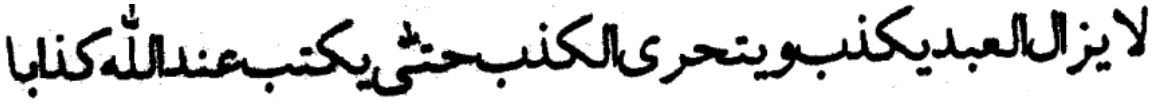
“Save yourself from lying as it accompanies evildoings and both lying, and evildoing persons are in Hell. Adopt truth [instead] as it accompanies righteous acts and both of them are in Heaven”. (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Ibn Majah* and *Nasa’i*)

Hasan (May God have mercy upon him) said: “The difference between outer and inner, words and deeds, and what enters and leaves [the heart] is called hypocrisy and the basis of this difference and hypocrisy is on lying”. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him said:



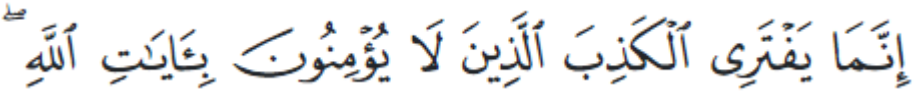
“A great breach of trust and act of dishonesty (*Khiyanah*) is that you say to your brother something that he deems true but [in reality] you are lying to him”. (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Bukhari fi al-Adab al-Mufrad* and *Abu Dawud* on the authority of prophetic companion Sufyan bin Osaid [May God be pleased with him])

Abdullah bin Mas’ud (May God be pleased with him) narrates from Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him):



“A servant always speaks lies and makes efforts for lies [to spread them] until such a one gets written as a liar by God”. (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Sahih Buhkari* and *Sahih Muslim*)

God says in Qur’an:



“The people who invent lies are the ones who do not believe God’s verses.” (Qur’an, Chapter 16, Verse 105)

Anas (May God be pleased with him) narrates from Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) that he said: “Accept six things from me, I will promise you Paradise”. Companions asked: “What are those six things?” He replied: “When

you speak, do not lie; when you promise, do not renege on it; do not breach the trust; lower your gaze [from looking at inappropriate things]; protect your privates; and stop your hands [from causing harm to others]". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Mustadrak Hakim* and *Khara-eti Ala Makarim al-Ikhlaq*)

There is a tradition that Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) refused to accept testimony of a witness who [once] spoke a lie (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Ibn Abi ad-Dunya* on the authority of Prophetic companion Musa ibn Shabeeh [May God be pleased with him]). Aisha (May God be pleased with her) narrates that Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) did not dislike any trait more than lying and falsehood. Therefore, when he learned about a companion that he exaggerates, a cloudiness would sink in his heart [about him] that would not get cleared until he learned that he has repented to God anew for his sin. Prophet Moses (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) entreated to God: "O Lord! Who among your slaves is better in terms of righteous acts?" The reply came: "That slave whose tongue does not lie, whose heart does not get the thought of evil-doing and whose private parts don't indulge in adultery or fornication". Luqman (May God have mercy upon him - an Israelite sage at the time of Prophet David [Peace and blessings of God be upon him]) admonishing his son said: "Do not speak a lie even though falsehood is delicious like bird meat, but a small lie destroys its speaker". Following saying has been reported from Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) in praise of the truth:

اربع اذا كن فيك فلا يضرك ما فاتك من الدنيا صدق الحديث، وحفظ الامانة، وحسن خلق وعفة طعمة

"If you have four traits then what you do not have from worldly possessions, would not harm you [i.e., these traits will be sufficient for you to make you ascend to great heights in this world and the next]: truthfulness in speech, guarding the trusts [entrusted by others whether material or non-material], good character and disposition, and eating only the lawful". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Khara-eti* on the authority of Abdullah bin Umar [May God be pleased with him])

Lying also includes the religious edict (*Fatwa* or non-binding religious opinion or decree) from a scholastic theologian who has not done a complete investigation of the matters. It also includes [citing] a prophetic tradition that has not been certified for authenticity because the purpose [of citation] is to express one's knowledge, excellence, and superiority. That's why, one considers it a personal insult in saying "*La Adri*" or "I don't know". Issuing edicts and citing prophetic narrations without proper investigation is forbidden (*Haram*) [in the Sacred Law].

Fifteenth Harm – Backbiting: God has condemned backbiting in Qur'an and declared it as tantamount to eating the flesh of one's dead brother [as cannibalism is already abhorrent and forbidden and when it involves one's own deceased brother, the abhorrence and repugnance gets tremendously magnified. The portrayal of backbiting in this manner is a Divine way of driving home the abhorrence, repulsion and forbiddance of this act which seems endemic in human interactions]. God says:

وَلَا يَغْتَب بَّعْضُكُم بَعْضًا ۚ أَيُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ
أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ ۚ

"And no one should backbite another. Does anyone of you like to eat the flesh of your dead brother? [No] you abhor it!" (Qur'an, Chapter 49, Verse 12)

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

كل المسلم على المسلم حرام دمه وماله وعرضه

"All of a Muslim – one's blood, property and honor - are all forbidden to another Muslim (as these are sacrosanct and inviolable in the Sacred law)". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him])

Backbiting violates the honor of another Muslim or another human being for that matter. Another prophetic tradition says:

لا تحاسدوا ولا تباغضوا ولا يغتب بعضكم بعضا وكونوا عباد الله اخوانا

"Do not have mutual jealousy and mutual enmity, nor should some of you backbite some others. [Instead] Become true servants of God and brothers unto each other [as it does not behoove true servants of God to have their focus away from God to low and vile traits of the lower self as manifested by mutual jealousy, enmity, backbiting and other similar negative traits]". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Abu Hurairah and Anas [May God be pleased with them])

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

لا تحقرن من المعروف شيئا ولو أن تصب من دلوك في اناء المستقي وأن تلقى اخاك ببشر حسن وأن ابر فلا تغتابنه

"Do not consider any good thing [in the world] as insignificant even if it is something [small] like pouring water in the pot of a thirsty person from your bucket [that you pulled from a well] and meeting with your brother (or another human being) with a smiling face [or in a nice way] and not backbiting one when one is absent [or is away from you as in this case the good thing you did is preventing your own self from committing anything wrong or harmful to another human being]". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Ibn Ab- ad-Dunya*)

According to a tradition, God revealed to Prophet Moses (Peace and blessings of God be upon him): "One who dies after repenting from backbiting, will enter Paradise after everyone else, and one who dies without repenting [from backbiting] will be the first one to enter the Hell". Prophetic companions used to meet with each other with graciousness, in contrast, the hypocrites ostensibly met each other nicely but behind their backs they used to backbite. God says in Qur'an:

وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ هُمَزَةٍ لُّمَزَةٍ

"Woe be upon the one who picks [people's] faults behind [their] backs." (Qur'an, Chapter 104, Verse 1)

One saint said: "We have seen the great ones from among the pious predecessors who did not consider praying and fasting as [Divine] worship, rather they considered refraining from dishonoring people as acts of worship". Abdullah bin Abbas (May God be pleased with him) said: "When you intend to list the faults of a friend, remember your own faults [first as that will prevent you from backbiting your friend]". Hasan al-Basri (May God have mercy upon him) used to address the humanity by saying: "O children of Adam! You cannot comprehend and perceive the reality of faith [in God] until you stop calling people bad for the fault that is within yourself and reform it first within yourself. When you get busy with the reformation of your [lower] self then that alone will be enough preoccupation for you, and you will not get any free time to cast a glance at others' faults. God's most beloved servants are such people". Malik ibn Dinar (May God have mercy upon him - a great saint and Gnostic) said: "Jesus Christ (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) passed by a dead dog in the company of his disciples and companions. Someone said: 'There is so much stink in this [dead] dog'. He said: 'How white its teeth are!' Hence, he prohibited them from backbiting the [dead] dog and advised them to mention the good qualities of God's creations". Umar (May God be pleased with him) said: "Engage in God's remembrance (*Dhikr*), there is [inner spiritual] healing in it; do not mention [or remember] people, there is [inner spiritual] disease in it [as people become predisposed to backbiting, slandering, ridiculing and hating them and to other similar inner ailments related to them]".

Meaning of Backbiting and its Limits: The definition of backbiting is that one is mentioned in such a way that if one hears it, would consider it bad [and would not like to have been talked about in that manner]. Whether this mention is related to a physical

deformity or moral vices, whether one's words are targeted or one's deeds, whether faults are picked in one's name or in one's lineage [or race], whether in matters related to one's faith or in one's worldly matters. The deformity of body is to call one blind, crooked eyed, bald, short, tall, dark, or yellowish or to associate one with an inner trait, the presence of which is considered bad. Finding faults in one's lineage is done by calling one's father a slave, sinner, lowly, shoe-repairer, or belonging to a disliked (*Makruh*) profession. Moral shortcomings by calling one ill-tempered, stingy, arrogant, ostentatious, short-tempered, coward, weak, humble, rejected or indulged in some moral vice like that. Fault finding in one's faith and religion is done by calling one a thief, a liar, drunkard, dishonest, oppressor, one who is lazy in acts of Divine worship like prayers and fasting, one who does not perform bowing and prostration well enough [in formal prayers], or one who does not protect one's fasting by refraining from backbiting and evil talking [as these vices vitiate one's fasting that is supposed to be an act of attaining spiritual purification]. Fault finding in one's worldly matters is done by [things like] calling one ill-mannered, rude, rejecter of people's rights, possessive, talkative, voracious, somnolent, sleeps at odd times, sits where one should not sit. Fault finding in clothes is done by saying that sleeves are too wide, shirt is too wide, clothes are filthy and dirty.

Some people say, that to say something to people [like rebuke and condemnation] about religious matters does not constitute backbiting because it's the condemnation of something that God has disliked. If one is a sinner and is called as such due of one's sins, then there is nothing wrong with it [according to them]. This argument is wrong because the companions did not mention such evils to Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) with the purpose of fault finding or insult but rather their purpose was to gain familiarity with religious matters and injunctions and there was no need to mention them in any gathering other than the gathering of the Prophet. There is a scholarly consensus (*Ijma'*) that the upshot of backbiting is to say something about one that if one hears, feels bad about it. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) has defined backbiting as such and if one mentions another in such a way, then one will be guilty of backbiting, will be termed as disobedient to one's Lord, and will be the flesh eater of one's [dead] brother [as backbiting is tantamount to that].

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) asked his companions: "Do you know what is termed 'backbiting'?" They replied: "God and His Prophet know the best!" He said: "Mentioning your brother's matters that he dislikes being mentioned [is backbiting]". Companions asked: "What if the mentioned thing [which is bad in nature and he dislikes having it mentioned] is actually present in him?" He replied: "If it's [actually] present in him then that's [exactly what] backbiting [is all about] otherwise [if it's not present in him], it's [baseless] accusation [which is far worse]". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him])

Backbiting is not done just verbally, instead every act constitutes backbiting that would reveal the fault of another person, whether by gesture, innuendo or by any clear or unclear [bodily] movement. In connection with backbiting, everything is forbidden (*Haram*) and illegal that is clearly articulated, vaguely expressed, word, action, innuendo, and gesture. Same [Divine] commandment [about prohibition of backbiting] applies to imitating someone, for example, imitating someone who limps [due to handicap in one's leg] is worse than backbiting. Backbiting can also be done in writing because writing is also an important means of expression like the speech. If an author [or writer in any medium of writing in any shape or form] mentions someone by name in one's writing and enumerates one's faults [it is still backbiting] except for when it is done for a valid reason. When Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) disliked an act of another person, then he did not use to say that such and such person does such and such thing(s), instead he used to say: "What has happened to people that they do such things?" (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Abu Dawud* on the authority of Aisha [May God be pleased with her])

Backbiting by Scholars and Scholastic Theologians: Worst backbiting is the backbiting by scholars and scholastic theologians (clergy or *'Ulema*) who are inclined to show off, because they express their purpose by acting as good [holy people but nevertheless, take a swipe at other people in the name of God and religion in a self-righteous way] and people (common folk and laymen) think that they (i.e., the scholars) do not backbite due to their ignorance, as they do not know that such scholars are simultaneously committing two sins - one of backbiting and the other one of showing off [their religiosity and piousness by putting down other people for their sins and mistakes]. Therefore, when some person is mentioned in front of them [for one's mistakes, sins or lack of moral rectitude and uprightness], they say: "All thanks to God for His favors on us that He did not put us in the trial of visiting the kings [or powerful political elites] and saved us from the humiliation of seeking the world". Or they would say in the form of prayer: "May God save us from such shamelessness and humiliation". Their purpose is to reveal the faults of other but for that sometimes, they use the words of [expressing Divine] gratitude and sometimes use the form of prayer and supplication [to God] but their purpose is neither prayer nor Divine gratitude. Sometimes they praise someone before backbiting. For instance, they would say: "Such and such person is so good, how much [Divine] worship such a one does but has one bad trait and not just that person, we are all involved in that bad trait which is the lack of patience and contentment". Apparently, there is their own condemnation in this, but the purpose here is not the condemnation of their own lower selves, but to reveal the fault of someone else. However, the style adopted here for that, is to convince the listeners of their humility and sincerity so they can be counted among the righteous. Such a 'scholar' has combined three sins [in doing that] - backbiting, showing off and [claiming] purification of the self - in other words, counting oneself among the righteous [by attributing piety to oneself in a self-delusional state of self-righteous arrogance that in turn impedes inner spiritual struggle and transformation] and out of foolishness, considers oneself purified from backbiting.

Satan hunts such people down very easily. These people are devoid of correct knowledge and [their] lower self (*Nafs*) continuously deceives them. Sometimes they pay attention to listening to backbiting about a fellow companion by saying: "All perfection to God (as He is free of any errors and defects)! This is so strange!" Here the name of God is not taken as an expression and confession of Divine magnificence and glorification but as an expression of their own inner evil. Sometimes for backbiting, the expression used is: "We are deeply saddened and grieved by such and such [bad] state of our friend. May God grant him or her comfort". This sharing of grief and supplication [to God] is not done with [true] sentiments of compassion, but rather the purpose of expression of one's own superiority. If supplication was really intended, they would have done it in solitude after their prayers, instead of doing it in a public gathering. Similarly, if they had been really saddened, they would not have expressed this in front of people who were unfamiliar with it. Sometimes they say: "What a pity! Such and such person is beset with great affliction! May God grant us and him or her the ability to repent!" Ostensibly this is a supplication but God is [well] aware of their inner evil and knows what their hearts are filled up with [as God knows the secrets buried in the hearts and subtle evils lurking in the innermost recesses of the soul], but they, out of their ignorance, do not know that by means of this supplication, they have become entitled to [Divine] punishment (*'Adhab*) instead of reward (*Thawab*). Listening to backbiting and expressing surprise on it, is also backbiting as it encourages backbiter for backbiting. The listener of backbiting is a partner in sin of backbiting until one stops it with the tongue. If one does not have the courage and power to stop [people from doing] it, then one should think of it as bad in the heart or get up and leave that gathering or try to change the subject. In those situations, there will be no reckoning from the listener. If one prohibits it from tongue while having desire in the heart to listen to it, then that is hypocrisy. The criterion of judgment is the heart. One will be protected from sin when one considers it bad in the heart. With regards to prohibiting it in the heart, it is necessary to explicitly prohibit it and to defend the mentioned.

Reasons of Backbiting: There are innumerable reasons for backbiting, but they all come under the purview of eleven reasons. Of them, [first] eight are related to the laymen and [last] three are related to prominent (non-ordinary) people.

First Cause - Enmity and Rancor: An event happens that ignites the fire of anger in the heart and when that happens, it only extinguishes by mentioning the faults of the one who caused the anger, whether [this mentioning] is done by the one being angered or someone else. Sometimes one ostensibly manages to control the anger, but rancor remains in the heart which is worse than anger, because rancor and enmity remaining in the heart, lays the permanent foundation for backbiting. It is learned from this that enmity and rancor are both causes of backbiting.

Second Cause - Agreeing with Others: In other words, agreeing with and verifying [the assertions of] friends and companions and getting indulged in it oneself while

seeing them do it and [feeling the need] to help and agree with them. Therefore, when people in a gathering play with someone's honor and ridicule, then one thinks that if one refuses to participate in it, disagree with them, change the topic or walk away, then they will get upset and will start to hate such a one. With this thought, one agrees with them and considers it an important basis of social dealings and homogeneity. Sometimes one's companions backbite someone out of anger. One pretends to be angry like them out of blandishment and oneself gets involved in backbiting and shows through this action that one is with one's friends in every situation, whether it is bliss, sorrow, anxiety, or ease.

Third Cause - Caution and Pre-emption: Sometimes one conjectures that one is being watched by someone and such a person will backbite against one in front of an important [or powerful] person or give evidence against one in certain matters. Due to these misgivings and apprehensions, one proactively starts to backbite and target such an individual to mitigate what such person is expected to say and to [proactively] discredit [such an individual]. One may also at first say correct things about another individual, so that one could develop a reputation of providing correct information about such person, so later on one can spread falsehood and rumors against that person [without being suspected of spreading lies] and claim that "lying in not in my nature and what I said about this person before, turned out to be true and what I am saying now is also true". One thinks that due to such advance planning and precaution, one would become safe because the person being feared will not dare to speak against one and if one happens to do that, will not be given importance and will not be believed.

Fourth Cause - Exemptions from Wrongdoings: Sometimes, backbiting is intended to show one's exemption from sins. In this respect, one asserts that one is not alone in doing wrong things. If one's exemption was the intention, one should mention one's own reasons [for doing wrong things] without referencing someone else. Since one's argument gets stronger by including another person, one includes another person [through backbiting].

Fifth Cause - Pride and Expression of Boastfulness: This is done by showing one's superiority by finding faults in others. For example, making statements that such and such person is ignorant, has faulty understanding, and has weak and useless speech. The purpose of such criticism is to show one's own superiority over another and proving that one has more knowledge than the other, one has the power of comprehension and one's speech is good. This criticism is to prevent people from respecting someone else like oneself and to prevent the other from gaining a prominent position in the society.

Sixth Cause - Jealousy: Sometimes jealousy provokes one into backbiting seeing that people are praising, loving, and honoring the envied. One cannot tolerate that and wants these blessings to be snatched away from the envied and people to start hating and dis-honoring the envied. To achieve this purpose, one starts to point out the faults of the envied. Jealousy is a state other than enmity and rancor, that comes out when another person commits some excess against one and they epitomize revenge.

Jealousy does not have that element [of revenge]. Sometimes one starts to envy even one's own benevolent friend and close companion.

Seventh Cause - Banter: In other words, someone's faults are brought out to create interest in a [social] gathering and to get laughs out of participants to have a good time.

Eighth Cause - Derogation: Sometimes backbiting is done as an act of derogation and humiliation of another person. This is the hallmark of arrogant people. There is no restriction in it for the other person to be present or not. Some people criticize and ridicule the person sitting in front of them without even thinking of how much humiliation they are causing, and what would have happened to them if they were in other person's place.

Causes of Backbiting Related to Prominent People: These three are very subtle and complicated. They are pure evil, but Satan instills greed in them that these causes are all good or there is some good in them but Satan mixes evil in them.

First Cause - Surprise: Sometimes a religious person makes a mistake so as an expression of surprise one says: "We are surprised at such an action of that person. He or she should not have done it". It is true that the mistake of a religious person is a cause of surprise but the one making that statement should not mention any names in expressing surprise. Satan transformed this religious sentiment into backbiting by provoking one into mentioning names and involved one into sin. Similarly saying this is also included in backbiting: "It is surprising for such and such person that one loves such an ugly person [from the opposite gender] or being an educated person goes to such and such ignorant person".

Second Cause – Feelings of Empathy and Sympathy: In other words, one becomes sad at the state of someone and seeing that person involved in something bad says: "The present state of such a person has made me perturbed. I regret the state of that person". The claim of regret is correct and commendable, but mentioning name had made it bad and a good sentiment became a cause of backbiting. Regretting the mistakes of a Muslim and to feel empathy and sympathy for one, is a good thing but Satan provokes one into mentioning names and hence mixes evil into something good.

Third Cause – Indignation for the Sake of God: Seeing someone involved in an indecent act or hearing something bad about one, can cause indignation due to the propulsion of faith. If indignation came about and got expressed by mentioning names, then this act will not only become deprived of Divine recompense but conversely will also become a cause of backbiting. Indignation for persuading good and admonishing against evil is good but it should be considered that if it needs to be expressed towards a certain person, then it should be done in such a way that anyone else does not become aware [of who it is for]. If it is necessary to mention names, one should not express indignation. These are the subtleties that not only the laymen, but also the scholars are not aware of and think that, if surprise, benevolence, and indignation is for the sake of God, there is no harm in mentioning names, which is a wrong conjecture.

Cure of Backbiting: All harmful inner propensities, qualities and vile habits can be cured through a combination of knowledge and actions [in accordance with the acquired knowledge]. Knowledge alone is not sufficient to cure these illnesses neither the actions alone. The medicine for each disease is the opposite of the cause for that disease. Firstly, we should find the reasons for backbiting and much has been written about it in previous pages. There are two methods of stopping the tongue from backbiting: one is a brief and the other one is a detailed method.

Brief Method of Curing Backbiting: It is that one has this firm belief that one achieves the displeasure of God by backbiting and that good deeds will go to waste as a result of that on the Day of Judgment, since backbiting transfers good deeds [of the backbiter] to the one who has been calumniated. If one does not have enough good deeds, then the victim's sins get transferred to backbiter's account [of deeds]. Furthermore, one becomes akin to a cannibal, eating flesh of one's own dead brother by backbiting against one's brother [in relation, in faith or in humanity, i.e., any individual]. How great is this humiliation? If one's account of deeds has both good and bad deeds, but the scale of bad deeds is heavier, then this individual will go to Hell. Suppose, the two scales of a person are equal [in weight]. In a sad turn of events, this person's one sin tilted the scale of bad deeds due to backbiting and made one deserving of Hell.

When one looks at the [Prophetic] traditions and the warnings that have been given about backbiting then out of fear, the tongue would not [even] agree to do backbiting. This strategy can also be useful that one casts a glance on oneself before doing backbiting. Perhaps one can find a fault within oneself and then worry about mitigating that, instead of picking up faults in someone else and earning sins as a consequence of that. If one finds a fault within oneself, one should condemn one's own lower self (*Nafs*) and castigate it. Why there is a need to castigate others [in case of one having faults within oneself and rarely anyone is devoid of that]? One should think that just like one is not able to remove faults within oneself, others may not have been able to do so. This is in case that fault is by one's own choice [in terms of allowing it to persist] and if it's there by birth [and hence by no choice of one's own] then to condemn it is to condemn the Creator. Just like a man called out a sage as: "O ugly man!", he responded: "O brother! If beauty or ugliness was in my power, I would have made my countenance good". If one does not find any faults in one's own soul, one should thank God that He granted one the ability to avoid sins and not involved one in backbiting which is a great fault among faults, what act is worse than eating the flesh of a carcass? If one looks [deeply] into this matter, there is no one devoid of faults. Only the Being of God is devoid of any faults [and blemishes]. One thinking of oneself as being devoid of all faults, is pure ignorance and a foolish idea and is itself a big fault. With regards to protecting oneself from backbiting, one matter that can be useful is that one deduces (construes) oneself as others, in other words, one should think: "Just like I am grieved by backbiting against me, others would also be grieved by my backbiting against them.

Just like I am not pleased with backbiting against me, would others be pleased with backbiting against them?"

Detailed Method of Cure: Detailed method of cure is to look at the reasons that instigate backbiting. Cure for every sickness is possible by eradicating its [root] cause. Causes and instigating factors of backbiting have been mentioned before. Hence, if the cause of backbiting is anger [towards someone], it should be cured by [convincing oneself] that: "If I become angry and not control it, God will be displeased with me due to my backbiting because He has prohibited backbiting and I disobeyed Him and considered His Commandment as unimportant". Second cause of backbiting is conformity (or being in harmony with one's companions), that is, doing backbiting to be a good sport with one's friends [when they are backbiting]. One should think of what benefit it is if one receives the approval of creations, when it results in displeasure of God, the Exalted [the Creator and Owner of all]? Who is foolish enough to displease the Lord while seeking the pleasure of other than God?

Third cause of backbiting is attributing purity to one's own self, in other words, attributing sins and wrongdoings to others, to express one's own exoneration from them and to enumerate the purity of one's own self. One should think that the displeasure of people holds no meaning in front of displeasure of God. Then the displeasure of God is certain due to backbiting but approval of people, in front of whom the exoneration of one's own self is desired, is not guaranteed through it. The dignity of this world can only be supposed (desired) as one may or may not get it, however, the humiliation and loss of the Hereafter is certain that one is bound to get as a result of backbiting. Following in the footsteps is only permitted of people who are subservient to the Will of God and follow His commandments. It is not permissible of those who violate the Divine commandments, no matter the high rank they are on in this worldly life. If the cause of backbiting is to express one's superiority over others, one should cure it by contemplating that whatever status I had before God was gone due to this backbiting. If one still gets some worldly reward and honor, then what is its value? Also, it is not certain that one will even get it as people may or may not believe what one has to say [in terms of backbiting others]. If they don't even believe, any remaining dignity one has left, will go down the drain and they will start thinking of one as a liar.

Backbiting due to jealousy has double the Divine retribution - first is due to being jealous on worldly blessings that are bound to decline, and second is that one added to it the retribution of the Hereafter due to backbiting the person one was jealous of. This entails a loss of both this world and of the faith. Another harm of backbiting is that one's good deeds get transferred to the person who has been backbitten and one's bad deeds get transferred to the backbiter. If the incentive for backbiting is ridicule, one should understand that one is accumulating humiliation before God by humiliating another. If one looks at one's final end and see how much shame and humiliation one will have to suffer on the Day of Judgment while stepping towards Hell, lifting the burden of sins of

those one ridiculed on one's own shoulders. If one thinks in this manner, fear of God will be born in the heart and one will not even dare to ridicule another. One is more deserving of ridicule than another because of one's own foolishness in ridiculing another, consequently, handing oneself over to the humiliation of the Day of Judgment.

To have mercy on someone due to the sins is a praiseworthy sentiment, however, Satan is jealous of this righteous act and wants to mislead one by making one utter a word that can cause one's righteous deeds to be transferred to the person one had mercy on. This way, the loss of another [involved in sins and wrongdoings] will be compensated and one will oneself get involved in a loss that cannot be compensated for thus becoming deserving of pity oneself. Displeasure for the sake of God should not entail backbiting. When one has displeasure with another for the sake of God, Satan wants one to get deprived of Divine recompense one is expected to get by indulging in backbiting. Same is the state of surprise. If one expresses surprise at another's state, one gets involved in backbiting. Secondly, no one is deserving of one's surprise, instead one should be surprised at one's own self (*Nafs*) for losing one's religion by expressing surprise at another person's faith or worldly matter thus becoming deserving of worldly retribution. This is because of lifting the veils from another person's hidden faults by using the excuse of surprise and exposing them publicly. Likewise, one's own faults will be exposed resulting in humiliation. The cure for all of these diseases is knowledge and Gnosis [of the Divine]. Tongue is protected from backbiting for the one whose faith is strong and possesses true understanding of the Divine [Gnosis].

Prohibition of Backbiting from the Heart: Disillusionment or harboring low opinion of others (*Su al-Zunn*) is forbidden [in the Divine law] like bad, evil, and rude talk. In other words, just like you are not allowed to narrate faults of others, similarly, it is not permissible for you to have any wrong thoughts about another in your heart, becoming disillusioned with another. Disillusionment means intentionally thinking of another person as bad. However, if it occurs unintentionally, then it is [Divinely] forgiven, rather doubt is also forgiven. What's forbidden is harboring bad and low opinion of others and it pertains to heart's inclination and intention [to harbor bad thoughts about others]. This disillusionment is forbidden in Qur'an:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ ٱجْتَنِبُواْ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ ٱلظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ ٱلظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ

"O you who believe! Avoid most of the conjectures as some conjectures are sins [as they lead you to disillusionment, negativity, hate and their likes, that in turn leads you to a materially and spiritually destructive path]." (Qur'an, Chapter 49, Verse 12)

Disillusionment or harboring low opinion of others (*Su al-Zunn*) is prohibited because only the Knower of the secrets from the unseen (i.e., God) is familiar with the secrets of the hearts. That's why, it is not permissible for any servant [of God, i.e., human being] to harbor wrong (negative) thoughts in one's heart about another. However, if wrong

things become evident in such a way that there is no room left for refutation or connotation [that it may not be what it seems] then a wrong thought can come and settle into the heart due to one's own direct knowledge and observation. However, the thought of an evil that one has not observed nor have heard about from reliable sources coming into the heart is, from Satan. Satan is the one who puts such insinuations into the heart, and that needs to be refuted vociferously, because the news conveyed by a sinner (or someone inclined to evil) is not reliable and Satan is the chief of sinners [and wrongdoers]. God says:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ إِن جَآءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌۢ بِنَبَإٖ فَتَبَيَّنُوٓاْ أَن تُصِيبُواْ قَوْمَۢا بِجَهَٰلَةٖ

"O you who believe! If a sinner (or a habitual wrongdoer or someone inclined to evil) brings to you news, then investigate it thoroughly and completely [before believing it] to avoid mistakenly causing harm to a nation (or group of people)." (Qur'an, Chapter 49, Verse 6)

This shows that it is not permissible to ascertain news (insinuations in the heart pertaining to wrong thoughts about others) brought by Satan. If disillusionment or harboring bad opinion of others, finds its way into the heart, one must think of a way to end it and should make the self (*Nafs*) understand that the other person's inner state is hidden from it and the happening that is causing disillusionment, can have possibilities of both good and evil and it is not necessary to prefer evil while leaving the possibility of good. Disillusionment is recognized from its signs and the sign is that one used to love someone but now starts to hate, previously one used to be hospitable and respectful towards that person but now the happiness [in dealing with that person] does not remain. One should understand from this change of heart that one is becoming disillusioned from the other. The cure is that if bad conjecture ever comes into the heart, one should not allow it to stay and settle [into the heart] nor should express it through the bodily limbs. The manifestation of disillusionment settling in the heart is that one starts to express abhorrence and hate and the expression through limbs is to start acting up in accordance with the disillusionment in the heart. In any case, Satan uses the slightest pretext as an excuse to put disillusionment in the heart towards other people and along with that, convinces one how intelligent and wise one is in perceiving evil, and that a believer sees with the Light of God even though in reality, one does not perceive with Divine Light, instead one perceives with the darkness of Satan's deception. However, if a trustworthy and reliable person informs you about something and your conjecture is inclined towards ascertaining that person, then one is exempted [from moral responsibility for the disillusionment] because if one rejects such a person, it would be a manifestation of disillusionment towards a truthful person who informed and is deserving of ascertainment and not rejection due to truthfulness. It is not suitable in any way that to have a good opinion of someone, one gets disillusioned with another. However, one should see that the informer does not have any enmity and is not jealous towards the one whose news is being conveyed, otherwise, the conveyed news can be suspected as a calumny which is a [valid] reason to reject the testimony. If one

encounters this situation, one should pause and neither think of accused as either a liar or truthful, instead one should think that the [inner] state of the person, whose news has been conveyed by the informer, is concealed from one before and is still concealed now.

If you become disillusioned with a Muslim, you should increase your hospitality and respect towards one and supplicate to God for good [for that person]. This way, your heart will become clear [of disillusionment] and Satan will get disappointed with you and lift his hand from you and will not try to put bad opinion of others in your heart due to the fear that you will start supplicating for good and showing more respect towards that person. If through a reliable testimony or personal observation, you come to know of an evil in a Muslim, instead of coming into the influence of Satan to backbite against one, you should advise one in such a way that others do not become aware of it. If you advise, there is no need to exult that you have come to know of the faults of another, and that God has sent you as an admonisher and sermonizer and granted you the ability to show the [right] path to others, nor should you get the thought of your own greatness in your heart or of the lowliness of the other. Instead, just like you become perturbed after knowing about your loss, you should get remorseful about the state of the other. The intention should be that the fault does not remain in the other person. One should try that the other person gets on the right track on one's own without needing your advice or someone else would offer the advice that would benefit the other. If you acted on this method then instead of one, you will get three rewards [from God]: first for advising, second for being remorseful on the state of the other, and third for the help you provided for the religion of another.

Exceptions for Backbiting: There are six exceptions to the prohibition of backbiting [in the Sacred Law], i.e., it is permissible to do that in these six situations:

1. First for the redressal of oppression [in the form of oppressed complaining to the authorities about the oppression of the oppressor],
2. Second for the mitigation of evil and to get help [from someone who has the power to help] for removing the sins [and it could be one's own sins],
3. Third for getting legal opinion [from theologians and jurists by narrating to them the actual happenings and complaints about others],
4. Fourth to prevent Muslims from the evil of others [if one sees them inclined towards wrong ideologies in the garb of religion],
5. Fifth for the name that has become prevalent among people [that may seem offensive but one whose name has become known, does not mind it],
6. Sixth for open sins of another [that one commits openly and is proud of it].

Sixteenth Harm – Talebearing: Talebearing or spreading gossip and secret matters of others that may cause harm or trouble, is one of the harms of tongue. God says:

وَلَا تُطِعْ كُلَّ حَلَّافٍ مَّهِينٍ ﴿١٠﴾ هَمَّازٍ مَّشَّآءٍۭ بِنَمِيمٍ ﴿١١﴾

“And do not listen to the one who is accustomed to false swearing, is a cheap (undignified) person, has no value [as one is dedicated to frivolity], who taunts a lot and is a talebearer.” (Qur’an, Chapter 68, Verses 10-11)

A verse later, God says:

عُتُلٍّۭ بَعْدَ ذَٰلِكَ زَنِيمٍ

“One who is a harsh tempered and evil person.” (Qur’an, Chapter 68, Verse 13)

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

لا يدخل الجنة نمام

“A talebearer will not go to Heaven”. (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Abu Hudhaifa [May God be pleased with him])

Abu Hurairah (May God be pleased with him) narrates from Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) who said:

احبكم الى الله احاسنكم اخلاقا الموطئون اكنافا يالفون ويؤلفون وان ابغضكم الى الله الحثاؤن بالنميمة المفرقون بين الاخوان الملتمسون للبراء العشرات

“The most beloved to God from among you are those you are best in their mannerism (morals, manners, inner and outer dispositions), those who are soft-hearted, who love and are loved [by others]. The most disliked people among you are those who are tale-bearers, who sow discord among brothers and seek faults of innocent people”. (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Tabarani Awsat* on the authority of Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him])

The definition of talebearing is to reveal something whose revelation is bad, especially if the person about whom something has been revealed minds it, or one who hears dislikes it. It is not necessary that the revelation has been done by tongue as writing and allusion are substitutes of tongue. Furthermore, it is not necessary that talebearing is related to [someone’s bad] words or actions or faults. Talebearing is the expression (or revelation) of anything that is disliked. When one comes across other people’s undesirable matters or states [as a result of someone revealing them], one should adopt silence. However, one should speak if intention is to benefit a Muslim or removing a sin. For example, if one sees someone unjustifiably taking someone’s possession or

property, one should give testimony to protect the rights of the victim and should inform that such and such person has taken one's property.

The driving force behind talebearing is to harm the person whose saying or related matter is revealed or to express love to the person who brings in the news or just to have a good time as getting involved in useless matters provokes one into talebearing. If someone does talebearing in front of one and says: "Such and such person says this about you, is doing such and such against you, is conspiring against you to harm you, is a friend of your enemy, or is trying to destroy you", and other things like that, one should act on six things. Firstly, one should not believe such a person because talebearer is a sinner (*Fasiq*) and the testimony of such a one is not even acceptable. God says:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ إِن جَآءَكُمۡ فَاسِقُۢ بِنَبَإٖ فَتَبَيَّنُوٓاْ أَن تُصِيبُواْ قَوۡمَۢا بِجَهَٰلَةٖ

"O you who believe! If a person inclined to evil, brings to you a news, investigate it thoroughly. Haply, you could harm a nation [or group of people] due to ignorance [of not knowing the real matter and getting deceived by lies of people with ulterior motives]." (Qur'an, Chapter 49, Verse 6)

Secondly, one should forbid [the talebearer] from talebearing, advise [against it] and clarify the evil of such act because God has said:

وَأۡمُرۡ بِٱلۡمَعۡرُوفِ وَٱنۡهَ عَنِ ٱلۡمُنكَرِ

"And admonish good actions and exhort against bad actions." (Qur'an, Chapter 31, Verse 17)

Thirdly, one should have disliking towards a talebearer for the sake of God because such a one is disliked by God and it is obligatory to dislike a person who is disliked by God [because of this unethical action]. Fourthly, one should not get disillusioned with one's brother (or sister) who is absent [when talebearing is done against him or her]. God has said:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ ٱجۡتَنِبُواْ كَثِيرٗا مِّنَ ٱلظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعۡضَ ٱلظَّنِّ إِثۡمٞۖ

"O you who believe! Avoid most of the conjectures as some conjectures are sins [as they lead you to disillusionment, negativity, hate and their likes, that in turn leads you to a destructive path]." (Qur'an, Chapter 49, Verse 12)

Fifthly, one should not become curious about finding more information when hearing what was rehearsed before one because God has forbidden that. He said:

وَلَا تَجَسَّسُواْ

"And do not spy on one another [or have idle curiosity to probe into private or

undesirable matters of others that people do not like to be revealed]." (Qur'an, Chapter 49, Verse 12)

Sixthly, one should not get involved in the same matter that one forbids the talebearer from, for example, saying "Such and such person (talebearer) has told me this about such and such person (the person whose undesirable matter is being exposed)".

Umar bin Abdul Aziz (May God have mercy upon him) said that a man came to him and started to say something about another individual, but he told him: "If you want, we can investigate your saying. If it turned out to be lie then you will be what this verse [of Quran] says, 'If a sinner comes to you with a news, thoroughly investigate it', and if it is true, you will be as the verse [of Quran] that says, 'Such a one is a frivolous person who taunts and does talebearing'. Third situation is that I will forgive you". That man said: "O leader of believers! Please forgive me, I made a mistake and will not make this mistake again". According to a tradition, a friend of a wise man came to meet him and started to say something about another friend [of his]. The wise man said: "You came after so many days and as soon as you came, you committed three crimes: firstly, you sowed enmity between me and my friend; secondly, you filled my tranquil and empty [of any grudges and evil thoughts] heart and mind with distress and restlessness; thirdly, you harmed your own honesty [and credibility]". Hasan (May God have mercy upon him) used to say: "One who does talebearing about another person will [certainly] do talebearing against you to someone else". It is an allusion to the fact that a talebearer is not worthy of being believed and considered true, because such a one has committed grievous sins like lying, backbiting, sowing mischief, dishonesty, deception, hypocrisy, jealousy, and sowing discord among Muslims [or anyone for that matter]. Such a one is bent on putting an end to bonds [of love, friendship, harmony, and peaceful coexistence] that have been Divinely commanded to be maintained and instead, spreads anarchy and turmoil (*Fasad*) on earth (world). God says:

وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَآ أَمَرَ ٱللَّهُ بِهِۦٓ أَن يُوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ ۙ

"They sever the bonds [of mutual love, friendship, harmony, and peaceful coexistence] that God has commanded to be kept [intact] and [instead,] spread turmoil in the world." (Qur'an, Chapter 13, Verse 25)

In another verse, God says:

إِنَّمَا ٱلسَّبِيلُ عَلَى ٱلَّذِينَ يَظْلِمُونَ ٱلنَّاسَ وَيَبْغُونَ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ ٱلْحَقِّ ۚ

"Blame is only on those who unleash cruelty and oppression on people and are rebellious in the world with no right or justification [for their injurious behavior]." (Qur'an, Chapter 42, Verse 42)

Even if a talebearer is truthful, he or she is not devoid of lowliness because such a one has not been mindful of the dignity of others and did not act on concealment [of their private matters]. Some people have said that talebearing is made up of lies, jealousy and hypocrisy and these three traits are components of humiliation [and lowliness for

the talebearer]. In summary, the evil of talebearer is huge, and one should safeguard against it.

Seventeenth Harm – Two-Faced Attitude or Hypocrisy: The hypocrisy of tongue is also [an] enormous [sin]. A double-speak talker takes a lot of advantage of enmity between two enemies. Whoever such a one meets, ensures him or her of one's sincerity and support, and bad-mouths the other party. It rarely happens that one meets with two opponents and stays away from speaking in favor of both of them. This is real hypocrisy. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

تجدون من شر عباد الله يوم القيامة ذا الوجهين الذى يأتى هؤلاء بحديث وهؤلاء بحديث

"A two-faced person will be found in a very bad state on the Day of Judgment, who used to say something to one and something else to another". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Ibn Abi ad-Dunya* on the authority of Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him])

Abu Hurairah (May God be pleased with him) used to say: "A two-faced person is not trustworthy in the sight of God". Everyone has agreed that having a two-faced meeting with two different people is hypocrisy. If one praises the opposition that two opponents have for each other and assures both of them of one's support [in separate meetings with them], then this is two-faced attitude. Similarly, if one praises someone on the face but starts to enlist their faults in their absence then this is also two-faced attitude. It is better to adopt silence or praise only the person who is right and this praise needs to be the same on the face or behind the back, even if it's done in front of one's opponent. Abdullah bin Umar (May God be pleased with him) was informed by people that they say things in front of elites and authorities that they don't say when they are not with them. He said: "We used to consider it hypocrisy during the time of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Tabarani*). If one has the courage, one should stop illegal things or evil talk. If one does not have the capability, one should be silent but consider it bad in the heart.

Eighteenth Harm – Praise: On some occasions, even praise is not permissible. As far as narrating someone's faults is concerned, it comes under the commandment [regarding prohibition] of backbiting. There are six harms of praise. Four of them are related to the one praising and two are related to the one who has been praised.

Four Harms Related to the One Praising: First harm is that the person praising does so much exaggeration that it becomes a lie. Second harm is that sometimes showing off gets included in praise, in other words, although the praise may be true, the person praising wants to display one's love for the praised although there is no love in the

heart, or one is not convinced in one's heart about the traits of the praised for whom one is merely expressing love as a show off. In this way, one becomes a hypocrite. Third harm is that sometimes one says things that one has not investigated or have certain knowledge and information of. A man praised someone in front of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) who told him:

ویحک قطعت عنق صاحبک لو سمعها ما افلح ثم قال ان کان احدکم لا بد مادحا
اخاه فلیقل احسب فلانا ولا ازکی علی الله احدا حسیبه الله ان کان یری
انه کذلک

"You broke the neck of your companion (proverbially speaking as it implies that praising on the face can be very destructive as it causes one to gloat, be proud and arrogant, and get involved in self-aggrandizement and other similar inner destructive qualities that harm one's spirituality as they are the diseases of the soul)! If one hears it, one will not attain salvation [as one would have developed diseases of the soul as a result of your praise]. If it is necessary for you to praise your brother then say that, 'I consider such and such like this (alluding to conjecture as opposed to certainty) and do not attest to his purity before God as God is the [real] knower of him [and his inner reality as God is the knower of every fiber of the inner being of an individual]'. This [type of watered-down] praise [where knowing the truth of the matter has been attributed to God] should be done when you know [for sure] that one is like that". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Abu Bakra [May God be pleased with him])

This harm is related to those clear traits that are known through proofs (evidence) [hence, there is an element of conviction about them], for example, to say that such and such person is God-fearing, righteous, abstinent [from worldliness] and giver of charity. It is clear that these traits are hidden, and they are related to the inner being of an individual and we don't have a way of knowing them [with certainty]. However, it is right to say that, 'I have seen one praying the early morning pre-dawn (*Tahajjud*) prayers or have seen one performing the pilgrimage and giving charity', because these matters are certain and directly observed. To call someone just or agreeing with the Divine destiny (*Qadha*) is also not right, because justice and accepting God-appointed destiny are matters related to one's inner being and to have knowledge of them without a test (trial and tribulation) related to one's inner being is not possible. Umar (May God be pleased with him) heard a man praising another so he asked him: "Have you travelled with him?" He said: "No!" He again asked: "Are you his neighbor in the morning and the evening?" He again answered: "No!" Umar (May God be pleased with him) said: "I swear by God! In my opinion you do not know him. You are praising him without knowledge and investigation. One's [inner] traits become apparent in travels, dealings, and closeness at all times, whereas you are not his companion during travels, nor a neighbor or have done dealings with him related to buying and selling. On what basis are you praising him?" Fourth harm is that the one praising with praise provides an opportunity of

happiness for an oppressor or an evil doer even though it is illegal [in the Sacred Divine Law]. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) has said:

ان الله تعالى يغضب اذا مدح الفاسق

"Verily God becomes displeased when an evil doer is praised". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Ibn Abi ad-Dunya* and *Bayhaqi* on the authority of Anas bin Malik [May God be pleased with him])

Hasan (May God be pleased with him) said: "One who prayed for the long life of an oppressor has expressed the desire that the continuous acts of disobeying God in the world continues for a long time. Oppressor and evil doer are deserving of condemnation and negation so that such a one becomes saddened and refrain from one's oppression and evil. Such a one is not deserving of praise".

Two Harms Related to the One Praised: First harm is that the praise and appreciation causes the birth of arrogance (*Kibr*) and self-conceitedness (*'Ujub* or having a high opinion of oneself whether mistaken or not, and it's the direct opposite of humility) in the heart. Both of these inner qualities are lethal and destructive [to one's inner being and spirituality that in turn could lead to outer physical harm]. Second harm is that one becomes pleased with praise and this misunderstanding would become firmly ingrained in the heart that, "I am good that's why people praise me". This credulity or high regard for oneself will make one lazy in performing [righteous and good] deeds and will infect one with the disease of self-righteousness [or self-conceitedness] (*'Ujub*) and will give rise to this realization in the heart that there is no need to do any [righteous and good] actions now. That's why, in the above tradition it has been said about the one praising that, "You have not treated your friend well by your praise and have broken the neck; if one hears it, one will not attain salvation".

Mutraf (May God have mercy upon him) said: "Whenever I heard my praise from another person's tongue, I became lowly in my own eyes and my self (*Nafs*) became humiliated to me". Ziyadah ibn Abi Muslim (May God have mercy upon him) said: "Whoever listens to one's own praise or eulogy, Satan involves such a one into pride and boastfulness, but a believer is saved from that". Ibn al-Mubarak (May God have mercy upon him) said: "The sayings of both Mutraf and Ziyadah are correct, however, what Ziyadah has said is a picture of the hearts of common folk and Mutraf's saying is the reality of the [spiritual] elites (*Awliya* or saints and Gnostics), in other words, common folk become proud as a result of their praise and elites are humbled". The one praised becomes lazy in doing righteous deeds or praise results in the birth of self-righteousness and arrogance and both of these are lethal diseases that cause the death of the soul just like killing causes the death of the body. If the person praised is protected against aforementioned harms, then there is nothing wrong in it, instead, such type of praise is good. That's why, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) praised various companions of his. The prophetic companions had such high character that such praise did not cause the feelings of pride, boastfulness, self-righteousness, and arrogance being born in their hearts. Instead, they used to be

grateful to God and adopt even more humility and abasement. That's why, praising oneself with one's own tongue is not a good thing because it has pride in it. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

انا سيد ولد آدم ولا فخر

"I am the leader of all the children of Adam (i.e., entire humanity from the beginning till the end of times, from the first to the last on earth) and there is no pride in it". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Tirmidhi* and *Ibn Majah* on the authority of Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri [May God be pleased with him])

In other words, he was not saying it out of pride or boastfulness like other people, who used to count their qualities and expressed pride in them. The pride (word has been used in terms of "happiness" in this sentence) [without the element of pride and boastfulness] of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) was due to proximity and intimacy with God, it was not due to being the leader of humanity or being [Divinely] created first and foremost [before God created anyone or anything] (this is among the mystical teachings that unlock the secret of creation when understood with the eye of the soul when it is illumined with Divine illuminations, as understood by Gnostics of every age). Mujahid (May God have mercy upon him) said: "Angels accompany children of Adam (i.e., all human beings). When a Muslim mentions one's brother in a good way then angels say, 'May God make you like that as well!' but when mentioned in a bad way, angels say, 'O human being! Your faults are hidden, just stop at that and express gratefulness to God that He did not humiliate you by exposing your faults'".

Responsibility of the Praised: One who gets praised should not gloat over one's praise and not allow even a slight amount of dust from arrogance (*Kibr*) and self-aggrandizement (*'Ujub*) to fell on the surface of one's heart. This can happen only when one thinks at the time of one's praise that the moment of departing from this world is very delicate and dangerous, ostentation and other destructive qualities of righteous deeds are lying in ambush; in a moment, all righteous deeds can go to complete waste. The one praised should examine one's own faults that the one praising is not even aware of, otherwise he/she would never have praised.

Nineteenth Harm – Negligence with Mistakes of Speech: Negligence with subtle mistakes of speech and conversation, is also a great harm [of the tongue], especially those that are related to the Being and Attributes of God and are connected to religion, and such words can be uttered correctly by scholars and the eloquent. The speech of those devoid of knowledge and eloquence, is not devoid of mistakes. However, God forgives such mistakes due to the ignorance of the speaker. Abdullah bin Abbas (May God be pleased with him) narrates that a man came to Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) and started to say: "Whatever God and His Prophet wants [should happen]". Prophet replied:

اجعلتني لله عديلا بل ما شاء الله وحده

"Are you making me a partner of God [in Divinity as implied by your wording]? [I am only a slave and messenger of God and not His partner in Divinity.] Instead [you should say], 'Whatever God, who does not have any partners [in Divinity], wants'". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Nasa'i* and *Ibn Majah*)

Abdullah bin Abbas (May God be pleased with him) said: "Some of you, attribute partners with God in such a way that you make a dog a partner by saying, 'If it had not been for the dog, there would have been a theft in our house at night'".

Umar (May God be pleased with him) narrates from Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) who said:

ان الله تعالى ينهاكم ان تحلفوا بآبائكم من كان حالفا
فليحلف بالله وليصمت

"God forbids you from swearing by the name of your ancestors. One who needs to swear should either swear by God or stay silent". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*)

These are some examples. The [types of] mistakes made in speech can be guessed from them that common folk do not look at, even though, there is accountability for them. It is not possible to fathom these mistakes. Contemplating on the harms of the tongue mentioned up until now reveal that there is no safety in leaving the tongue free [to chatter or say anything one wants] and this saying of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) is replete with wisdom:

من صمت نجا

"One who kept silent attained salvation". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Tirmidhi*)

This is because all these harms of [misusing the] tongue are lethal and capable of endangering the self (*Nafs*). An individual can be protected against these destructions and dangers by staying silent as there are only dangers in speaking, except [in situations] when one has capabilities of eloquence, knowledge, God-fear, and inner spiritual contemplation (*Muraqaba*).

Twentieth Harm – Questions of the Laymen: This is also a big harm as laymen ask all kinds of questions about Divine Attributes (Qualities of God) and ask about Divine speech, and letters and words [with questions] like, "Are these temporal (that came into being at some point in time) or ancient (eternally existing)?", although, the only right that laymen have is to follow the Divine commandments from Qur'an. It is because [doing] actions and deeds are hard on the self (*Nafs*) and tongue and mind feel the taste in useless argumentations. That's why, such people have been seen knocking at the door of knowledge who do not possess even a least bit suitability with it (i.e., people pretend to be knowledgeable who are not even least bit knowledgeable). Satan provokes them and convinces them that, "You are scholars, possessors of blessings and excellence [in

knowledge], you have a worthy opinion and you should express it [for public benefit]". Sometimes, Satan gets words out of these self-proclaimed "scholars" that are pure disbelief and one does not even realize the nonsense they have uttered. For a layman, these intellectual argumentations are even more dangerous than major sins, especially those related to God's Being (*Dhat*) and Attributes (*Sifat*). Their job is only to have faith on what's revealed in Qur'an without having any debates, argumentations, and hesitations and to be engaged in Divine worship. One speaking about subtle points of knowledge that one's mind is unable to comprehend, is also like a layman, even though one has good talking skills on other topics. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) has said:

ذرونی ما ترکتکم فانما هلک من کان قبلکم بکثرة سئوالهم
واختلافهم علی انبیاءهم ما نهیتکم عنه فاجتنبوه وما امرتکم
به فاتوا به ما استطعتم

"What I have not informed you about, leave that to me because people before you were ruined because they used to abundantly ask questions and differ with their prophets. What I have asked you to refrain from, stay away from it and what I have commanded you to do, do as much as you are able to do". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him])

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) further said:

یوشک الناس یتساءلون حتّٰی یقولوا قد خلق اللّٰه الخلق،
فمن خلق اللّٰه؟ فاذا قالوا ذلک فقولوا قل هو اللّٰه احد اللّٰه الصمد
حتّٰی تختموا السورة ثم لیتفل احدکم عن یساره ثلاثا و
یستعذ باللّٰه من الشیطان الرجیم

"It seems to me that during the course of [excessive] questioning, people will start to say, 'If God has created the creations then who has created God?' If people ask that then tell them, 'God is One, God is not in need of anything or anyone', recite to them the entire Chapter of Sincerity [from Qur'an, i.e., chapter 110, that expounds on the Divine unity] then one of you should spit on the left three times and seek God's refuge from Satan, the accursed". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him])

[The importance of not asking unnecessary questions is also underscored by the story of Khizr and Prophet Moses (Peace be upon him) (Qur'an, Chapter 18, Verses 60-82)] Khizr (Peace be upon him) made it clear to Prophet Moses (Peace be upon him), before taking him along [on a journey for learning esoteric knowledge] to not ask him any questions until he himself mentions it. When Prophet Moses (Peace be upon him) asked for the reason for drilling a hole in the [base of the] boat in a state of surprise, he reminded him of his promise. Prophet Moses (Peace be upon him) apologized for it but

it happened three times. In the end, Khizr (Peace be upon him) announced his parting of ways with Prophet Moses (Peace be upon him).

The laymen asking about the secrets (inner wisdom) and subtle matters related to the religion has great harm in it as it can lead to difficult situations. Hence, it is obligatory to stop and prohibit laymen from asking such type of questions [as it prevents them from doing the work they should be doing]. Their job is to follow the Divine commandments, but they did not do that and instead got involved in things (useless questioning and argumentations that caused distractions and roadblocks) that were not required off them. Such is person is deserving of Divine reckoning.

Chapter 5 - Calamities Caused by Anger, Rage, Acrimony and Jealousy

Ghazali's fifth book in the third volume or quarter of his *magnum opus* "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God" deals with all too familiar ills of the lower self that are deeply ingrained in the human nature – the ills of anger, rage, enmity and jealousy. The havoc caused by these inner destructive qualities of the soul in an individual's relations with fellow human beings and among nations and societies, is all self-evident. Ghazali goes deeper into the reasons behind the rise of these negative forces embedded deep in one's self and prescribes cure for eventual eradication of their destructive nature. Contents of this book by Ghazali are presented here in condensed form as follows [11]:

Rage is a glowing spark of fire. It is a fire about which the following verse of Quran was revealed:

نَارُ ٱللَّهِ ٱلْمُوقَدَةُ ﴿٦﴾ ٱلَّتِى تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى ٱلْأَفْـِٔدَةِ ﴿٧﴾

"It is a fire lighted by God [as a test for human beings so they can perceive its harms and then strive to overcome it for their own benefit] that will reach the hearts [if left unhinged]." (Qur'an, Chapter 104, Verses 6-7)

This fire remains hidden in the depth of the heart like sparks in the ashes. Just as fire appears when fire stones are rubbed against each other, likewise the fire of anger ignites when fire stones of arrogance get rubbed even a slightest bit. People of wisdom (*Baseerah*) and spiritual unveilings (*Mukashafa*) have perceived this reality with the light of certitude that one vein of human being extends itself to Satan. One who gets extreme bouts of anger is a claimant of one's proximity with Satan. The magnificence of dust [that symbolizes humility] is in remaining calm, composed and dignified, and magnificence of fire is in igniting and remaining active [in spreading and burning anything that comes in its way]. Therefore, if a human being is subjugated by anger, then understand that such a one has less dust and more fire in one's composition. Enmity and jealousy are both the results of anger and both of them are extremely destructive. They are the cause of spreading destruction, they are the reason for turmoil and tumult, and heart is their locus and center. Heart [in its physical form] is a piece of flesh that when it's sound, the entire administration of the [human] body functions correctly and when it's faulty, the entire system of the body fails. It is learned from this that all three things are destructive. That's why, I considered it pertinent and appropriate to inform the travelers and strivers on the spiritual path of their inherent destructiveness so they can forge ahead by safeguarding against them, in case these bad traits are rooted in their hearts, they could root them out and treat them for [an enduring] cure. Informing about evils is also necessary because one who is not aware of them, gets involved in them. Merely being aware of the evil is also not adequate unless and until one is aware of the prevention strategies against them. In forthcoming

chapters of this book [called "Harms of Anger, Rage, Acrimony and Jealousy"], harms of anger, rage, acrimony, and jealousy will be explained and strategies to safeguard against them will be discussed.

Condemnation of Rage and Anger

God says:

إِذْ جَعَلَ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُواْ فِى قُلُوبِهِمُ ٱلْحَمِيَّةَ حَمِيَّةَ ٱلْجَٰهِلِيَّةِ فَأَنزَلَ ٱللَّهُ سَكِينَتَهُۥ عَلَىٰ رَسُولِهِۦ وَعَلَى ٱلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

"When unbelievers gave a place in their hearts to enmity and anger and that enmity and anger too were [born out] of ignorance, so God descended tranquility and forbearance from Himself on [the hearts of] the Prophet [Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)] and believers [to cool down a hostile situation and to prevent combating ignorance and hostility with ignorance and hostility, that only further inflames conflicts and spirals out of control to the detriment of people and nations involved, as cooler heads and hearts are more capable of mitigating hostilities between people and nations]." (Qur'an, Chapter 48, Verse 26)

Abdullah bin Mas'ud (May God be pleased with him) narrates that Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) asked: "Who do you all think is strong and powerful". We replied: "One who cannot be defeated in wrestling". He said: "This is not the case. Strong and powerful is the one who keeps one's [lower] self (*Nafs*) in control [from lashing out and causing harm] at the time of anger (i.e., restrains one's anger and patiently bears it)". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Sahih Muslim*)

Abdullah bin Umar (May God be pleased with him) narrates that Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

من كف غضبه ستر الله عورته

"One who restrains one's anger, God hides the faults of such a one [from becoming public knowledge causing disgrace and humiliation]". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Ibn Abi ad-Dunya*)

One Gnostic told his son: "O son! Intellect (clear rational thinking and healthy state of mind) does not remain [in place] at the time of anger. Least anger comes to those who are the most intelligent. If anger is for the sake of the world, then it is a fraud and deception and if it is for the sake of the Hereafter, then it is forbearance and wisdom". It has also been said that anger is the enemy of intellect. Umar (May God be pleased with him) used to say in his sermons: "That person from amongst you will attain

salvation who refrains from greed, desires from the lower self, and anger". One Gnostic said: "A person who is subservient to [his or her own] lust and anger, these two bad inner traits push such a one towards Hell".

Reality of Anger: God has created the animal [and all living beings like human beings] in such a way that it comes to an end due to its internal and external causes. God has created nourishment according to the physical composition of the animal and has also created in it the desire for it so that it eats according to its needs, thus preventing itself from extinction. External factors and causes are present in terms of dangers like sword and other weapons. God has created in human being a power that can be used for one's defense and protecting from these harms. God has created the power of rage from fire. Whenever something comes across that is against one's wishes or one is prevented from one's objective, that fire ignites and the flame intensifies to such an extent that the blood in the heart gets energized and gets spread in all the veins above [the heart]. Just like the flames of fire rise upward or the boil of a pot rises upward, the face and eyes of an individual become red due to softness and lucidity of skin that expresses the redness of blood like an object inside a glass is displayed. This is the state when one gets angry at someone of a lower rank [in terms of physical, political, material, or socio-economic power] and knows that one is capable of taking revenge. If one gets angry at someone of a higher rank and is not able to take revenge, the blood gathers in the heart from the outer skin, instead of spreading and becomes a cause of gloom and sorrow. That's the reason of face turning pale in this state. If one gets angry at a person of equal rank, then both of these states are outwardly expressed - face sometimes becomes red and sometimes pale. This is the state of perturbation.

Visible Signs of Anger: Signs of anger that appear on the outer body are that the color [of face] changes, body starts trembling and no order and balance remains in the actions of the limbs to the extent that foam starts to flow out of the mouth, eyes become red, nose starts to swell and shrink and face becomes disfigured. If an angry person looks at one's face at the time of anger, one will become reduced (humiliated) in one's own eyes and will be so ashamed of one's ugliness that the entire anger would dissipate. One should think that when anger has such adverse impact on the body that the face became disfigured, then how bad of an impact it would have on the inner being and how much disfiguration it would have caused to it. The outer being is the title and mirrored reflection of the inner being. Firstly, the inner being deteriorates then this deterioration moves towards the outer appearance. The change of exterior is the fruit and result of the change of the interior. Impact of anger on tongue is that an individual starts cursing and using such filthy words that when sensitive and decent people hear them, they will be inundated with shame. One oneself would be ashamed on uttering them, provided one is not in a state of anger or when anger dissipates and one remembers one's state of anger and uttering nonsense and vulgarities, not able to utter the words correctly with vulgarities, nor able to keep a logical sequence in sentences, instead one uttered most words that did not even mean anything.

Degree of Moderation in Anger: Not having any anger at all is not desired either. That anger is desired that is subservient to intellect and Divine path (*Deen*) so that it comes when there is a need for assertiveness [for example, in situations where outright abuses, cruelty and oppression are seen] and does not come when there is a need for forbearance. Keeping it within the bounds of moderation is that perseverance (*Istiqama*) that God has held His servants accountable for, and that has been praised by Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) in these words:

خیر الامور اوساطها

"Best of the matters are those that are within the bounds of moderation [avoiding extremes and extremism in all matters of life]". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Bayhaqi*)

One who never gets angry even on occasions when cowards become brave [due to being conscientious for wrongs around them], should get one's self cured. Similarly, one whose anger has exceeded bounds [of moderation, morality, ethics, and good demeanor] is also in need of a cure until one is able to distinguish between excessive and moderate anger. In other words, anger needs to be cured in both absence (or paucity) and excessiveness. Good state is the state of moderation that is described by Qur'an as the "Straight Path of Perseverance" (*Sirat al-Mustaqeem*) (Qur'an, Chapter 1, Verse 6) even though this "Straight Path of Perseverance" is thinner than a hair and sharper than a sword [showing that the path of balance and moderation in between all extremes, is delicate and difficult to adhere to, as human temperament swerves from the middle path of moderation towards extreme tendencies and positions in all matters of human existence]. One who is not able to reach the state of moderation, should try to get as close as possible to it, instead of giving in to despair. It is not necessary that one who is not able to do everything in a good way, does everything in a bad way. Some evils are lighter compared to other evils and some good things are superior to other good things. That's why, as much as possible, one should stay close to doing good and prevent evil. Success and ability in doing good (*Tawfeeq*) is from God alone.

Can Anger be Eradicated or Mitigated by Means of Spiritual Striving?

If one's beloved thing is snatched away, stolen or damaged, one necessarily gets angry at that. There are three types of things that one loves. First kind includes things that are necessary for all such as food, residence, clothing, and health, etc. If someone beats one up to harm or injure the body, then one should have anger against such a person because protecting the body (or outer existence) is imperative. No one likes to have things destroyed that are essential for one's survival and one should have anger against such detriments. Second type of things that one loves include things that are not essential for any human being such as fame, power, abundance of wealth, servants,

rides, etc. However, people have [traditionally] deemed them essential owing to their habits and ignorance, and love them to such an extent that if they lose any of them, their intensity of grief and sorrow is great and consequently get angry at their loss and at the people whom they perceive to have caused that loss. Third kind of things that one loves include matters that are essential for some but not for others. For example, books are essential for a scholar, that's why, a scholar loves the books [for their areas of expertise] so if one tears them apart, burns or sinks them, one becomes angry.

What is the effect of spiritual striving [for restraining anger] on these three types of things that one loves? For the first kind, spiritual struggle is not carried out to eradicate anger, instead it's done so that the heart no longer remains subservient to it and ostensibly one should use it only to the extent that is liked by the Divine Law and intellect. This is possible through spiritual struggle (*Mujahada*) and trying by means of employing forbearance and patience in dealing with it for some time until toleration and forbearance becomes one's second nature. Completely removing anger from the heart is not what the human temperament demands nor is it possible, however, ending its intensity and reducing its strength is possible so that there is no perturbation in the inner being, and it should have such an effect on the outer side that no one could tell the current state of anger from looking at one [because of the inner restraint against anger]. Even though it is a difficult spiritual struggle but it's not impossible. If one continuously makes efforts, there will be no reason for failure [in attaining a state of controlling anger]. The same applies for third kind of things since some things are essential for some like the first kind of things [that are universally essential for all humans]. Same effect will be seen on both types of things as a result of spiritual struggle.

Anger that one gets on second type of things, is possible to completely eradicate through spiritual struggle by taking the love of these things out of one's heart and convincing oneself that one's homeland is the grave and final abode is the Hereafter and this world is just a bridge that one passes on to reach the abode of the Hereafter. Or the world is just a [stopover] station where one stays for a few moments to gather the reliance (provisions) needed to proceed on to the upcoming journey and to the next station that is one's permanent destination. Other than that (i.e., the provisions gathered for the upcoming journey), whatever is there is a burden that will be on one with no benefit in the grave or in the Hereafter. One should adopt indifference and detachment from worldly possessions and remove their love from one's heart. If one does not have love for one's dog, one would not get angry at someone hitting it. It shows that anger is subservient to love [and attachment to something]. The purpose of spiritual struggle for this kind of things is to completely eradicate anger. However, it is very difficult to have that happen, instead, it is easier to weaken the anger or to not act on its implications. One can be contented even if that is attained. An individual who is dominated by God's omnipotence and oneness (*Tawheed*) and thinks of everything as a gift of God that is within the Divine power and prerogative, does not get angry at [God's] creations [as one knows that God is the ultimate disposer of all affairs and nothing reaches one, whether it is good or bad, except by God's permission], because one has

this belief that creations themselves don't have any prerogative of their own and they are all subjugated and conquered by Divine power and omnipotence just like a pen is subjugated in the hand of a writer [so that it's not the pen but the writer who is writing and pen is only doing what the writer wants]. It is learned from this that anger gets eradicated as a result of the domination of God's oneness and omnipotence (*Tawheed*) and having a good opinion of God (*Husn al-Dhun*) (belief that God will only do what is good for one even though it may not seem that way) is also effective in this respect because one understands that whatever happens, comes from God and whatever God does to one is a good thing whether it is keeping one hungry and thirsty, getting one injured, or even having one lose one's life through someone [or something]. After this belief, there is no reason left for anger just like no one gets angry at the person who draws out the blood [for medical reasons as it is believed to be done for the purpose of preserving and imparting health].

The upshot of this discussion is that there is only one way of protection against the fire of anger that is removing the world entirely from the heart (wherever Ghazali uses the word "world", he is referring to worldly attachments and entanglements of the heart that destroy the heart which is the essence of human existence, and he is not referring to the world per se as Ghazali has repeatedly mentioned that world is a means for attaining eternal happiness and endless triumph). It is only possible when the seeker [on the path of truth] (spiritual traveler) is aware of the harms of the world (i.e., worldly attachments and entanglements of the heart). The explanation of the condemnation of worldliness is forthcoming where these harms will be elucidated. Here suffice is to inform that one whose heart becomes devoid of the love of the world, becomes safeguarded from most of the reasons of anger. Reasons that cannot be entirely eliminated, can [still] be weakened, and weakening them can also cause the anger to weaken. We seek from God the beauty of ability to do the right and consequent success (*Tawfeeq*) in this endeavor [of eradicating or weakening the anger].

Causes of Anger

This is known very well by now that the way to cure an ailment is to eradicate its material and causes. John (Yahya [Peace and blessings of God be upon him]) asked Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him): "Which thing is harder?" He replied: "Your anger". John asked: "Why does the anger happen and what are the causes of its nourishment?" Jesus replied: "Arrogance, impetuousness, desire for honor and fame. Factors that increase the intensity of anger are: Haughtiness, ridicule, exaggeration, provocation, interrupting one's conversation, rigid insistence, greed for material possessions and fame, etc." All these come under the purview of bad and destructive morals, manners, temperaments, and inner dispositions, and are condemned in the Divine law. Presence of these reasons makes it impossible to get rid of anger. That's why, it is necessary that if one has one or more from among the causes of anger then

they are dealt with and mitigated through their opposites. Hence, arrogance should be removed though [inculcating genuine inner] humility, self-righteousness and self-aggrandizement *('Ujub*) through the condemnation of one's lower base self (*Nafs*), and pride should be removed through this belief that the other person [who is the subject of one's anger] is also a human being and like other servants, is also a servant of God - [all] people [of the world] are in reality the sons and daughters of the same father [and mother, i.e., Adam and Eve] who later on became separated [from each other along geographical, cultural, linguistic, racial, tribal, religious and ethnic lines] and walls of differences emerged [that hampered integration and harmony] between them, but all are equal in their humanity. Pride (word used in this context is in the sense of one's inner happiness and joy, and not "pride" per se) should be on inner excellences [that are good, salubrious, constructive and positive morals, manners, temperaments and inner dispositions that are characteristics of one's inner being and one's true reality - the heart and the soul]. Self-conceitedness, arrogance, and pride are destructive evils that are the roots and basis of bad inner evils and if you are not devoid of them, you are absolutely no better than others. Pride does not suit you. How are other people, compared to whom you feel proud, are inferior to you and in what ways? Just like you have nose, ears and eyes, they possess the same organs, they are the offspring of the same father (Adam [Peace be upon him]) whom you are also an offspring of [and hence they are your brothers and sisters]. Humor can be eradicated by getting involved in the serious matters related to the practice of the faith [that demand moral rectitude and spiritual struggle to eradicate low, vile, inner qualities, dispositions and propensities and replacing them with high morals, manners, qualities, dispositions and temperaments that require a lifetime of valiant and persistent struggle] so that one will not even get time to indulge in futile endeavors [like ridiculing and looking down at others]. One should avoid useless endeavors by busying oneself with the acquisition of inner excellences (*Fada-il*), good morals, manners and inner dispositions (*Ikhlaq al-Hasana*), and religious knowledges [that leads one to these noble goals and brings about the refinement and purification of the soul, to first harmonize and humanize a human being, and then lead one to the pinnacle of human achievement which is the proximity and Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*) of the Divine] with the belief that these things take one to the eternal happiness and endless success (*Sa'ada*) of the afterlife. Regarding ridicule, one should remember that just like I am pained by being a target of ridicule by other people, similarly others must be bothered by being ridiculed by me, that's why, no one should be ridiculed. Habit of fault finding can be abandoned by not uttering a bad word from one's tongue, otherwise the person addressed [in a bad fault-finding way] also retains a tongue; it is possible that the person addressed, ends up saying something even harsher. Eradication of intensity of greed is possible through contentment with only what we really need [as opposed to perceived needs that may not even be realistic]. There is dignity in contentment and in obliviousness from unneeded things, while [being in] need [of someone or something] has humiliation in it.

Cure is not easy for any trait from among these [negative and] reprehensible inner traits, dispositions, propensities, manners, and temperaments. Instead, there is a need to

endure hardships and intense inner spiritual struggle. The objective of this inner spiritual struggle is first to get familiarized with harms of all of these evil inner traits, dispositions, propensities, manners, temperaments, and vile habits so that the heart becomes disgusted with them and their evils become crystal clear. After that, one needs to act upon the opposites of these low and evil inner traits, dispositions, propensities, manners and temperaments and keep persistently acting on them for as long as it takes for them to become one's second nature and until they become habits and do not remain difficult to act upon. In order to get rid of anger, it is imperative for self (*Nafs*) to be purified of these inner evils since they are the source and origins of [bad] habits originating and nurturing anger.

Ignoramuses get anger for another reason. These pathetic people, out of their ignorance and lack of understanding, think that there is manliness (audacity and daringness) and bravery in displaying anger and those people who do not get angry are not deserving of being called "men". Such people construe anger as self-respect, high aspiration, and dignity and [undeservedly] give it good names until the self gets inclined towards it and starts to consider it good. Calling anger self-respect and bravery is ignorance, instead it is a disease of the heart and an indication of the fault in intellect. The argument for that is that a sick person gets angry more than a healthy person because such a one is weak-hearted. An ill-mannered and ill-charactered person falls prey to anger more than a good-mannered and righteous person. Hence, a lowly person for the sake of one morsel [of food] and a miser for the sake of one grain becomes angry. The way to administer treatment to these ignoramuses is that they should be told the traditions of tolerance, forbearance, forgiveness, and magnanimity of the righteous and should be told that they used to restrain their anger. Such traditions have also come from Prophets, saints, Gnostics, wise, scholars and good leaders while opposite traditions have come from ignoramuses and fools.

Cure of Anger After Incitement

The upshot of the discussion so far is that the causes of anger should be pushed away, and its inherent reasons should be eradicated so that the anger in a wrong way never happens. Here the objective is to explain what one should do if anger occurs to one. Should one act on its implications or have perseverance and prevent the self (*Nafs*) from acting on the implications of anger? It is apparent that latter is the expression of intelligence and it's a great spiritual striving and its culmination is through knowledge and action.

Eradication of Anger by Means of Knowledge: Following six matters are the crux of knowledge [related to eradication of anger]: **Firstly**, one should ponder and deliberate on the past happenings and traditions about the superiority and excellence of restraining anger, forgiveness, forbearance and tolerance and the consequence of that

would be the awakening of the desire [in all] to attain these excellences. This desire will restrain one from taking revenge and extinguish the fire of anger. Malik ibn Aws ibn al-Hadthan narrates that once [caliph] Umar (May God be pleased with him) became angry at someone and ordered his sentencing [due to a crime he committed]. That man said: "O leader of the faithful! Please consider this verse [from Qur'an]:

خُذِ ٱلْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِٱلْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ ٱلْجَٰهِلِينَ

'Practice forgiveness and exhort [people] to perform good righteous deeds and avoid ignoramuses.'" (Qur'an, Chapter 7, Verse 199)

The narrator of this tradition says that Umar (May God be pleased with him) used to repeatedly read this verse and ponder over its meanings. That was his routine. Despite having tremendous mastery over the meanings and understanding of Qur'an, he continued to deliberate over Qur'an. Hence this verse invited him to deliberate. The outcome was that the man received a reprieve and got out of it.

Secondly, one should make ones' lower self (*Nafs*) fear God's retribution [for one's own wrongdoings out of Divine justice] and tell it that God holds far more power over one compared to what one has over another. If I try to vent my anger over another then it's possible that I may not be able to avoid God's anger [over my own injustices and excesses towards another] on the Day of Judgment when I will be more in need of [Divine] forgiveness and mercy. It is inscribed in some Divinely revealed scriptures that God sent this revelation: "O human being! When you get angry, remember Me, I will remember you at the time of My displeasure with you [because of your own wrongdoings] and will not include you among the people who have been destined for destruction [due to their own excesses and transgressions against the bounds of decency and fairness]". It has been narrated that wise (sages) used to necessarily accompany the kings of the Children of Israel. Whenever, a king used to get angry, his wise companion used to put forth a parchment in front of him that had the inscription, "Have mercy on the poor, be afraid of [your own] death [and reckoning before God] and remember the Hereafter". King used to read this writing and get calmed down.

Thirdly, one should make oneself apprehensive of the repercussions of enmity and revenge, and of the sufferings and difficulties as a result of animosity, that the one I will be angry at, will become my opponent and will try to cause trouble for me. However, not having any anger for the sake of worldly considerations, sufferings and difficulties is also not devoid of dangers, because in it lies the lust and desire to keep worldly life cordial. This is certainly not an action of the Hereafter, instead it is imposing lust over anger. Just like anger, lust is also an evil. That's why, suppressing anger for the sake of the world (pleasant worldly life) will not earn one remuneration [from God]. If some worldly worry is impeding the peace of heart and body [to carry on with one's efforts for spiritual advancement], then removing it will certainly result in Divine remuneration.

Fourthly, when one is getting angry, one should imagine the ugliness of one's outer appearance [due to anger as it is a leading factor in making one look ugly]. Just like people's faces become distorted at the time of anger, my own face would have been distorted. In this manner, the repugnance of rage will be born in the heart. One should also think that a person becoming angry, resembles a mad dog and a ferocious wild beast, while a person who is tolerant, forbearing and not prone to anger, resembles prophets, saints and wise in one's characteristics. At that occasion, one should offer this choice to one's lower self (*Nafs*) whether it wants to resemble dogs, beasts and evil persons or it wants to resemble the prophets and scholars. If the self (*Nafs*) has even a particle's worth of decency and faith present in it, it will certainly be inclined towards the following of scholars and prophets and would never like to resemble dogs [in the madness of anger].

Fifthly, one should deliberate on the reason that is inviting one to revenge and causing the restraining of anger seem difficult. Obviously, there would certainly be a reason as anger does not come for no reason. For example, the reason could be that Satan incites one to take revenge and instills such thoughts in the heart that, "If you restrain your anger and not take revenge, people will declare you incapable and defeated, they will humiliate and insult you and will consider you lowly". If that is the reason then one should say this to one's lower self (*Nafs*), "You do not like the humiliation and ignominy of the worldly life and are inclined towards taking revenge to avoid it, but you do not think about facing the great ignominy on the Day of Judgment when a person will grab you by your hand and will take one's revenge from you and you will not be able to do anything. You are afraid of becoming diminished in the eyes of the people but have no fear of becoming diminished in the eyes of prophets, saints, and angels. Anger should be removed for the sake of God, what do you need from [fellow] human beings [as it is not done for their sake]? Is humiliation and honor in their hands? Even if someone oppresses you, you should not take revenge as this oppression will be a source of great humiliation for the oppressor on the Day of Judgment. Do you not like to stand on the Day of Judgment when it will be proclaimed that whoever's remuneration is due from God should stand up then those people will stand up who would have forgiven the oppressors [and thus became worthy of immense Divine recompense due to their magnanimity]?"

Sixthly, one should think, "My anger is really an indication that [my real belief is as to] why certain thing did not happen according to my wishes and desires and why it happened according to the will and intent of God? How can it be that my objective is superior to God's objective? Only that will happen that God wills. There can be no other outcome of my anger and short-temperedness that I will face the punishment for this and will become subjected to Divine retribution".

Eradication of the Incitement to Anger by Means of Actions: If one happens to get angry, one should say this with the tongue:

أعوذ بالله من الشيطان الرجيم

"I seek God's refuge from Satan, the accursed".

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) has advised to say it like that at the time of getting angry. (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Suleiman ibn Sard [May God be pleased with him])

When [wife of the Prophet] Aisha (May God be pleased with her) used to get angry, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) used to grab her nose [as a sign of affection] and said: "O Owaish! Say it like this [by way of supplicating to God]:

اَللّٰهُمَّ رَبَّ النَّبِيِّ مُحَمَّدٍ اغْفِرْ لِيْ ذَنْبِيْ وَاَذْهِبْ غَيْظَ قَلْبِيْ وَاَجِرْنِيْ مِنْ مُضِلَّاتِ الْفِتَنِ

O God! Lord of Muhammad! Forgive my sins, remove anger in my heart and protect me from trials and tribulations that lead one to misguidance". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Ibn as-Sunny fi al-Youm wa al-Layla*)

It is recommended to do this supplication (prayer) at the time of anger. If anger still lingers after this, one should change the gathering [one is in], sit down in case of standing, lie down in case of sitting and get close to the earth from whence one has been created, this will instill humility in the self (*Nafs*). There is this expediency (wisdom) in sitting and lying down that heart becomes tranquil because the cause of anger is heat and heat is caused by motion. If motion stops, heat will dissipate, and anger will also come to an end. If anger does not end with this strategy, one should perform ablution or take a bath with cold water because fire is extinguished with water as it has been narrated in a prophetic tradition:

ان الغضب من الشيطان وان الشيطان خلق من النار وانما تطفا النار بالماء فاذا غضب احدكم فليتوضا

"Anger is from Satan and Satan has been created from fire and fire is extinguished through water. If one of you gets angry, one should perform ablution (*Wudu*)". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Abu Dawud* on the authority of Atiyya al-Sa'di [May God be pleased with him])

Another prophetic narration alludes to performing prostration [to God] at the time of anger because in that state, a human being puts the best [bodily] organs (forehead and cheeks) on the humblest of all places (i.e., the ground). The wisdom of prostration at this occasion is that humility and lowliness is born in the heart and that the feeling of pride, arrogance and superiority goes away from the heart that incites anger.

Excellences of Forbearance

Forbearance, gentleness, and mildness (*Hilm*) is even superior to restraining anger because restraining anger means forcibly practicing forbearance. In other words, one who would restrain one's anger is the one who got angry in the first place. This is a difficult stage and a harsher spiritual exercise, but incessant efforts [in restraining anger] will obviate the need for forcibly practicing forbearance, instead one will gradually get accustomed to not being angry. Even if anger comes, one will not feel any difficulty in dropping it. This is the intrinsic [natural] forbearance and this forbearance means that one has perfect intellect, has intellect dominating one, and the force of anger is also subservient to the intellect. It has been learned from this that restraining anger is the initial phase of forbearance and natural inherent forbearance is its culmination. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

انما العلم بالتعلم والحلم بالتحلم ومن يتخير الخير يعطه ومن يتوق الشر يلقه

"Knowledge is attained by learning and forbearance [is attained] by becoming forbearing by means of deliberate conscientious efforts [by tolerating unpleasant matters]. One who intends good will be granted good [through Divine largesse and generosity] and one who safeguards against evil will be protected against it". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Tabarani* and *Daraqtani* on the authority of Abu al-Darda [May God be pleased with him])

Abu Hurairah (May God be pleased with him) narrates from Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him):

اطلبوا العلم واطلبوا مع العلم السكينة والحلم، لينوا لمن تعلمون ولمن تتعلمون منه، ولا تكونوا من جبابرة العلماء، فيغلب جهلكم علمكم

"Acquire knowledge and along with knowledge, search for dignified tranquility and forbearance. Treat your student and teacher in a mild and gentle way. Do not be among harsh and hot-headed scholars so that your ignorance becomes dominant over your knowledge". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Ibn as-Sunny fi al-Riyadatul Muta'allemeen*)

It has been informed in this that arrogance and sense of superiority engenders anger and these very inner characteristics stop one from forbearance and gentleness. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) used to pray in these words:

اَللّٰهُمَّ اَغْنِنِیْ بِالْعِلْمِ وَزَیِّنِّیْ بِالْحِلْمِ وَاَکْرِمْنِیْ بِالتَّقْوٰی وَجَمِّلْنِیْ بِالْعَافِیَةِ

"O God! Enrich me with knowledge, embellish me with forbearance and gentleness, dignify me with pious awe, reverence and fear of You, and beautify me with health and safety".

Abu Hurairah (May God be pleased with him) narrates from Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him):

ابتغوا الرفعة عند الله، قالوا وماهي يا رسول الله! قال تصل من قطعک، وتعطی من حرمک، وتحلم عمن جهل علیک

"Search for greatness with God". People asked: "What are the matters that cause one to attain a high rank before God?" He replied: "Keep your relations [of kinship] with the one who severs them, give to the one who deprives you, and treat one with forbearance and gentleness who treats you with ignorance". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Hakim* and *Bayhaqi*)

One man [at the time of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) prayed: "O God! I have nothing with me that I can give in charity [owing to my material poverty], however, I can do this much that I forgive whoever has caused me any suffering and that becomes a charity in my favor". God sent this revelation to Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) that He has forgiven him due to this supplication. (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Abu Na'eem fi as-Sahaba* and *Bayhaqi fi al-Shu'ab*)

Once Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) asked the companions: "Can anyone of you not become like Abu Damdam?" Companions asked: "Who is Abu Damdam and what are his special characteristics that we are not like him?" He said: "He was a man from previous nations who used to get up in the morning and made this supplication: 'O God! Today I give in charity my dignity and honor to those who oppress me'".

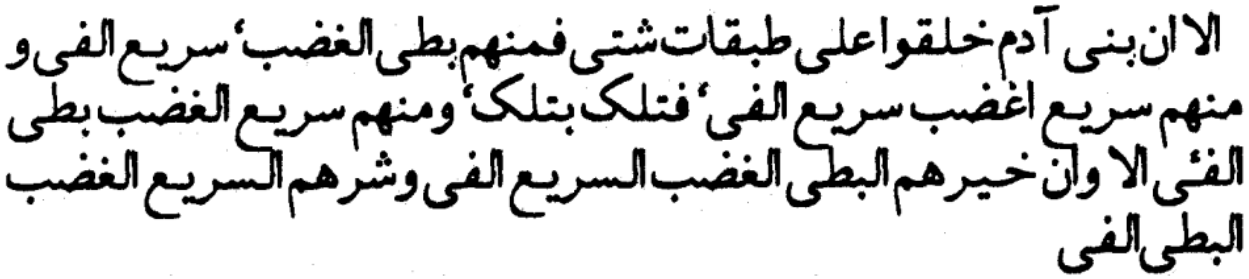
Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

ثلاث من لم تکن فیه واحدة منهن فلا تعتدوا بشیئ من عمله، تقوی تحجزه عن معاصی الله عزوجل وحلم یکف به السفیه، وخلق یعیش به فی الناس

"Three things are such that if they don't exist in one then do not consider one's actions as significant: Pious awe, reverence and fear of God (*Taqwa*) that prevents one from God's disobedience, forbearance (*Hilm*) that prevents one from foolishness, and good inner character traits (*Ikhlaq*) with which one spends one's life among people". (This

tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Tabarani* on the authority of Umm Salma [May God be pleased with her])

Different States of People in Terms of Anger: There are different states of people in terms of anger. There are some who are not capable of suppressing their anger but return to their original state [of peacefulness] soon, some do not display anger but retain enmity and rancor in their hearts forever. If we deliberate, there are four types of people in terms of anger: firstly, like grass that catches fire soon but extinguishes soon as well; secondly, like coal that catches fire late and extinguishes late; thirdly, like wet wood that catches fire late and extinguishes soon - this state is very good provided it is not out of apathy; fourthly, like something that catches fire soon and extinguishes late - such people are quite evil. Not getting angry at all is also not a good thing. Imam Shafa'i said: “One who does not get angry even after attempts to make one angry [with things that should cause anger] is a donkey and one who does not get appeased even after appeasement is a Satan”. Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri (May God be pleased with him) narrates from Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) that he said:


الا ان بنی آدم خلقوا علی طبقات شتی فمنهم بطی الغضب، سریع الفی و منهم سریع اغضب سریع الفی، فتلک بتلک، ومنهم سریع الغضب بطی الفئی الا وان خیرهم البطی الغضب السریع الفی وشرهم السریع الغضب البطی الفی

“Remember, the descendants of Adam (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) (i.e., all human beings) have been created in different groups [in terms of their inner character traits, temperaments, dispositions and propensities]. There are some who get angry late and get assuaged soon, there are some who get angry soon and get assuaged soon, in this manner one [bad quality like quickly getting angry] is compensated with another [quality that is good, like getting assuaged quickly]; there are some who get angry soon and get assuaged late. Remember, the better person among them is the one who gets angry late but get assuaged soon and worst among them is the one who gets angry late and get assuaged late”.

Since it has been proven that anger impacts human heart and mind, it becomes imperative for governing authorities to not punish anyone in the state of anger because one tends to exceed the limits of necessity [when angry]. Furthermore, lashing out one’s anger is also a means of satisfaction and pleasure of the lower self because one in a state of anger, does not get mollified and peaceful until one targets someone for one’s anger, even though, what should have happened is that one’s anger and

retribution both should have been only for the sake of God [and not for one's personal ego].

Reality and Consequences of Rancor and Excellence of Forgiveness and Gentleness

When one gets angry and is not capable of taking revenge owing to one's weakness, one becomes compelled to restrain it. The same anger transforms into rancor and malice in one's heart. The meaning of rancor is that hate and enmity is born in one's heart towards someone forever. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

المؤمن ليس بحقود

"A believer is devoid of rancor and malice [in the heart and hence, is a pure hearted person who bears no grudges and ill against anyone]".

Anger results in rancor and malice that in turn has following outcomes and consequences:

First outcome is jealousy and it means that malice engenders this desire in your heart that whatever wealth and blessings the other person has, gets snatched away; if another person has some blessing, then you are pained and grieved by it and if that person gets into hardship, then you become pleased. This is an action (hallmark) of a hypocrite and its condemnation will be elucidated soon. **Second** outcome is that there is an excess of jealousy, meaning that you laugh at another person's hardships and make fun of them. **Third** outcome is that you abandon another person and break all relations, even though one is desirous of meeting you and even come to you with that intention. **Fourth** outcome is that you insult and humiliate one. **Fifth** outcome is that you say things about one that are not even permissible to be said [in the Divine law], for example, you lie, backbite, reveal one's secrets [or private matters that one wants concealed from public eye], and find faults. **Sixth** outcome is that you imitate one with the idea of insulting and ridiculing one. **Seventh** outcome is that you cause one bodily harm, in other words beating (violence) and physical abuse. **Eighth** outcome is that you do not return one's rights and if you own a loan, you do not repay it back to one, not fulfil the rights of kinship, and not return one's confiscated thing. All these outcomes and consequences are forbidden (*Haram*) [in the Divine law]. The least you can do about malice and rancor is to safeguard yourself from these eight aforementioned harms and not become liable to God's disobedience [by indulging in any or all of these eight outcomes], instead think of it as wrong and consider it bad [from the heart]. [If you consider malice bad in your heart but still] You do not talk to one happily as you used to do before, do not look after one's needs, do not sit with one in a gathering, do not make Divine remembrance with one, do not help for one's benefit, do not pray for one nor

praise one, do not encourage one for righteous deeds, do not sympathize or share grief with one, then this small malice will cause a reduction in your degree in your *Deen* (path to God) and will be an impediment in attaining a great blessing and Divine recompense, even though you will not be deserving of Divine retribution for this [level of] malice [where you do not act on its eight outcomes]. Hence, when Abu Bakr (May God be pleased with him) swore that he would not give anything to his relative Mistah [whom he used to help financially before] because he was one of the people who was involved in a calumny against his daughter [who was also the beloved wife of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)] Aisha (May God be pleased with her), but when below verse [of Qur'an] was revealed [by means of Divine revelation to the Prophet]:

وَلَا يَأْتَلِ أُوْلُوا۟ ٱلْفَضْلِ مِنكُمْ
وَٱلسَّعَةِ أَن يُؤْتُوٓا۟ أُو۟لِى ٱلْقُرْبَىٰ وَٱلْمَسَٰكِينَ وَٱلْمُهَٰجِرِينَ فِى
سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ ۖ وَلْيَعْفُوا۟ وَلْيَصْفَحُوٓا۟ ۗ أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَن يَغْفِرَ ٱللَّهُ لَكُمْ

"And those among you who have [spiritual] distinction and excellence and have [worldly] means [as well], should not swear that they would not give to the relatives, poor and needy, and those who migrate in the path of God. They should [instead,] forgive them [their mistakes and wrongs] and disregard [any hurt caused by them]. Do you not love that God would forgive your own wrongdoings and shortcomings? Verily God is forgiving and merciful." (Qur'an, Chapter 24, Verse 22)

Upon hearing this verse, Abu Bakr (May God be pleased with him) said: "No doubt we want God's forgiveness". After that he started to treat Mistah the same way he used to treat him before [by helping him financially]. (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Aisha [May God be pleased with her])

It is better not to change one's [good] attitude [towards someone] due to rancor and malice, instead, if possible, one should increase one's beautiful conduct and treatment [towards someone who is the target of one's malice] for the spiritual struggle against one's lower self (*Nafs*) and for defeating Satan. Such act is the rank of saints and Gnostics (*Siddiqeen*) [which is the highest rank attainable by humanity] and among the superior actions of believers (*Mumineen*). It is because the person harboring malice can have one of the three states: first, fulfills the rights of the person one harbors malice against without any shortage or excess - this is justice. Second, is to treat person one harbors malice against with forgiveness, excellence, keeping ties of kinship - this is superior. Third, to snatch a thing from person one harbors malice against out of cruelty - this is oppression. This last state and rank belong to the despicable and evil, second one belongs to the saints and Gnostics, and first one belongs to the righteous.

Excellences of Forgiveness and Going Above and Beyond in Goodness

Forgiveness means that one waives one's own [legitimate] rights, in other words, one does not take revenge or fines. God says:

وَأَن تَعْفُوٓاْ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ

"And your forgiveness [and letting go of things that you are legitimately entitled for] is closer to pious awe, reverence and fear of God (*Taqwa*)." (Qur'an, Chapter 2, Verse 237)

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him said):

ثلاث والذى نفسى بيده لو كنت حلافا لحلفت عليهن ما نقص مال من صدق فتصدقوا ولا عفا رجل عن مظلمة يبتغى بها وجه الله الا زاده الله بها عزا يوم القيامة ولا فتح رجل على نفسه باب مسالة الا فتح الله عليه باب فقر

"Three things are such that if I had been someone who swears for things, I would have sworn about them: one is that property does not decrease by charity, that's why, give in charity; secondly, if someone forgoes one's right for the sake of attaining God's approval, God will grant such a one honor on the Day of Judgment; thirdly, if one opens for oneself the door of asking [others to provide for one's needs], God opens for one the door of poverty". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Tirmidhi*, *Abu Dawud* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Abu Kabsha al-Ansari [May God be pleased with him])

It has been narrated in another tradition of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him):

التواضع لا يزيد العبد الا رفعة فتواضعوا يرفعكم الله والعفو لا يزيد العبد الا عزا فاعفوا يعزكم الله والصدق لا تزيد المال الا كثرة فتصدقوا يرحمكم الله

"Humility bestows [this worldly and other worldly] elevation (higher spiritual rank) to a servant [of God], that's why, adopt humility, God will grant you elevation. Forgiveness bestows honor to a servant, that's why, forgive and God will bestow upon you honor. Charity increases property (material possessions), that's why, give in charity, God will have mercy on you". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Isphahani*

al-Targheeb wa al-Tarheeb and *Abu Mansur al-Daylami* on the authority of Anas [May God be pleased with him])

Uqbah (May God be pleased with him) narrates: "One day I came to Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him). I do not remember if I first held his hand or he held my hand. He said to me:

يا عقبة! الا اخبرک بافضل اخلاق اهل الدنيا والآخرة صل من قطعک وتعطی من حرمک، وتعفو عمن ظلمک

'O Uqbah! Should I not inform you about the most superior character traits of the people of this world and of the next? One who does not meet with you, you meet with such a one; one who deprives you, you give to such a one; one who wrongs and oppresses you, you forgive such a one!'" (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Tabarani, Bayhaqi* and *Ibn Abi al-Dunya*)

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said that Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) asked:

يارب ای عبادک اعز علیک، قال الذی اذا قدر عفا

"'O my Lord! Who is dearer to you from among your servants?' God revealed: 'One who forgives even though one has the ability to take revenge'". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Khara-eti Marakim al-Ikhlaq* on the authority of Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him])

Excellence of Gentleness and Clemency

Gentleness or clemency is a good characteristic and opposed to it is aggression and harshness. Both of the [latter] characteristics are born out of anger and ill temperament, whereas gentleness is born out of beautiful morals, manners, temperament, inner disposition, and peaceful nature. Sometimes aggression is born out of anger and sometimes from the intensity and domination of greed. People become deprived of their ability to think and understand at the time of intensity of greed and equilibrium of temperament is lost. However, gentleness is the fruit of beautiful morals, manners, temperament, and inner disposition (*Husn ul-Khulq*) and that [noble inner state] is achieved when forces of anger and lust are kept within the bounds of moderation. That's why, prophetic narrations have excessively praised gentleness. Hence, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

يا عائشة انه من اعطى حظه من الرفق فقد اعطى حظه من خير الدنيا والآخرة
ومن حرم حظه من الرفق فقد حرم حظه من خير الدنيا والآخرة

"O Aisha! One who has been bestowed with gentleness [by Divine largesse], has been granted goodness of both this worldly life and of the Hereafter, and one who has been deprived of gentleness has been deprived of goodness of this worldly life and of the Hereafter". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Ahmed* and *al-Aqeeli Kitab al-Du'afa* on the authority of Abdur Rahman bin Abi Bakr al-Maleeki [May God be pleased with him])

ان الله ليعطي على الرفق مالا يعطي على الخرق واذا احب الله عبدا اعطاه
الرفق ما من اهل بيت يحرمون الرفق الا حرموا محب الله تعالى

"God gives so much with [human display of] gentleness and kindness (*Rifq*) that He does not give with [human display of] ignorance and harshness. When God loves a servant (human being), He grants such a one gentleness; and people of a household who are devoid of gentleness, also become deprived of God's love". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Tabarani Kabeer* on the authority of Jareer [May God be pleased with him])

ان الله رفيق يحب الرفق ويعطي عليه مالا يعطي على العنف

"God is gentle and kind, He loves gentleness and gives so much on gentleness that He does not give with harshness". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Aisha [May God be pleased with her])

يا عائشة ارفقي فان الله اذا اراد باهل بيت كرامة دلهم على باب الرفق

"O Aisha! Adopt gentleness because when God intends to honor a home (an individual or a family), He shows them the path of gentleness". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Ahmed* on the authority of Aisha [May God be pleased with her])

من يحرم الرفق يحرم الخير كله

"One who is deprived of gentleness has been deprived of everything that is good". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Muslim* on the authority of Jareer [May God be pleased with him])

ايما والي ولي فرفق ولا رفق الله تعالى به يوم القيمة

"One who became a political authority and treated the general public with kindness, God will treat such a one with kindness on the Day of Judgment". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Aisha [May God be pleased with her])

الرفق يمن والخرق شئو

"Gentleness is a tremendous blessing and harshness is a bad omen [that only brings about evil repercussions]". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Tabarani Awsat* on the authority of Abdullah bin Mas'ud [May God be pleased with him])

Condemnation of Jealousy, its Reality, and Means of its Cure

Jealousy is a result of rancor and enmity and belongs to the same family of inner evils (negative traits, tendencies, and dispositions). Instead, it can be said that jealousy is a branch of rancor that itself is a component (outcome) of anger. There are so many branches emanating from jealousy that cannot be counted. There are many [prophetic] traditions in the condemnation of jealousy. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

الحسد يأكل الحسنات كما تأكل النار الحطب

"Jealousy devours good deeds just like fire consumes wood (i.e., nothing is left of good righteous deeds such as Divine worship, charity, service to people, etc., after harboring jealousy for anyone)". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Abu Dawud* on the authority of Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him] and *Ibn Majah* on the authority of Anas [May God be pleased with him])

In one prophetic narration, jealousy and its consequences and causes have been forbidden. It says:

لا تحاسدوا ولا تقاطعوا ولا تبا غضوا ولا تدابروا وكونوا عباد الله اخوانا

"Do not have mutual jealousy, do not stop meeting with one another [by cutting off relations of kinship or friendships due to petty issues or misunderstandings], do not have mutual enmity, do not turn your faces away from one another [as a result of hard feelings], and O servants of God! Become brothers [and sisters] unto one another!" (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*)

ثلاث لا ينجو منهن احد الظن والطيرة والحسد، وساحدثكم بالمخرج من ذلك اذا ظننت فلا تحقق واذا تطيرت فامض واذا حسدت فلا تبغ

"There are three things that no one is devoid of: conjecture, bad thoughts about others, and jealousy. I will tell you the method of getting rid of them. When a conjecture comes into your heart then do not consider it right, when bad thoughts come into your heart then keep yourself busy in your work [without paying attention to it], when jealousy is born then do not wish for it (i.e., the fruition of jealous thoughts)". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Ibn Abi al-Dunya* on the authority of Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him])

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) further said:

انه سيصيب امتي داء الامم قالوا وما داء الامم، قال الاشر والبطر والتكاثر والتنافس في الدنيا والتباغض والتحاسد حتى يكون البغي ثم الهرج

"My nation (*Ummah*) will soon get infected with the disease of other nations". Companions asked: "What is the disease of nations?" He replied: "Arrogance, expression of opulence, mutual competition in [attainment of] worldly means (wealth), mutual enmity, mutual jealousy, [all of these] to the extent that there will be rebellion [first] then turmoil will spread". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Ibn Abi al-Dunya* and *Tabarani* on the authority of Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him])

ستة يدخلون النار قبل الحساب بسنة قيل يا رسول الله! من هم؟ قال: الامراء بالجور، والعرب بالعصبية والدهاقين بالتكبر والتجار بالخيانة واهل الرستاق بالجهالة والعلماء بالحسد

"Six type of people will enter Hell a year before the reckoning [and accountability of the Day of Judgment]". It was asked: "O Messenger of God! Who are those people?" Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) responded: "Politically powerful due to oppression, Arabs due to nationalistic prejudiced racism (*'Asbiyah*) (although Arabs have been made a case in point in this Divine injunction communicated to humanity by Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him), the purport of this tradition applies to everyone, i.e., racism of any kind, practiced by any racial, ethnic and national group of people, leads them to Divine disfavor embodied by Hell), farmers due to arrogance, businessmen due to dishonesty, villagers due to ignorance, and religious scholars due to jealousy". (This tradition has been narrated in

Hadith collection *Abu Mansur al-Daylami* on the authority of Abdullah bin Umar [May God be pleased with him])

It has been narrated [in a tradition] that when Prophet Moses (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) went to Mount Sinai to converse with God, he saw a man in the shade of the Divine throne. He envied [the high rank and status before God of] that man and pleaded to God to tell him his name. God said: "What would you do with his name, instead We will tell you about his deeds. He did not get jealous with anyone, did not disobey his parents, and did not do any tale-bearing (transmitting people's matters that they don't want to be talked about or known, whether good or bad, to others, conveyed either unintentionally or intentionally with a malicious intent)". Prophet Zechariah (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said that God has said: "A jealous person is an enemy of My blessings, is angry at My decision, and is unhappy with My distribution [of Divine bounties out of Divine wisdom to the entire humanity as the Lord, Sustainer, and Cherisher of all creations; displeasure and anger with God's distribution is what jealousy with fellow humans actually entails]".

It should be known that jealousy is practiced for [Divine] blessings and Divine endowment. When God rewards a servant [of His] then another person has two states regarding that. Firstly, one dislikes that blessing and desires its downfall. This is the state of jealousy. From this, the definition of jealousy is to dislike a blessing [on another person who gets endowed with it] and desire its downfall. Secondly, one neither desires its downfall nor objects to its continuation [in another person who is endowed with it] but does want to achieve that for oneself as well. This is called "*Ghibta*" or desiring a blessing for oneself that another person has [without desiring its decline or removal from the other person. This is actually permissible in the Divine law]. Jealousy is forbidden in all circumstances, except when it is bestowed upon an evil person who uses it to sow anarchy and turmoil, promotes discord among people and harm them. Expressing dislike on such [misuse of] a blessing and desiring its downfall is correct because in this case, your dislike and desire for its decline is not because such a thing is a blessing, instead it is because it has been used as a means of [sowing] anarchy and turmoil. If there is no fear of anarchy and turmoil, then one would not be grieved by them nor would one desire that they get taken away. Considering the blessing [on another person] as bad, means that one thinks of God's decision as bad that He has preferred some of His servants over others in some things. It is such a reality that it cannot be used as a basis for an excuse for abhorrence and disliking nor does the Divine law allows that one interferes in Divine commandments and judges them on the criterion of one's own desires. What can be a greater sin than the sin of not being able to see another believer in comfort whose wealth is like a thorn in your eye, even though it does not harm you. Qur'an has strong condemnation for jealousy:

إِن تَمْسَسْكُمْ حَسَنَةٌ تَسُؤْهُمْ وَإِن تُصِبْكُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَفْرَحُوا بِهَا

"If you are in a good state, it becomes a cause of grief for them and if you are in a state of suffering, it is pleasing to them." (Qur'an, Chapter 3, Verse 120)

If a Muslim has a certain blessing that is obligatory to obtain in the Divine law such as belief in God (*Iman*), prayers (*Salat*), obligatory charity (*Zakat*), etc., it is obligatory to desire the achievement of these blessings. Not desiring them means that one is agreeing to sin [of not doing these obligatory acts of Divine worship] which is forbidden (*Haram*). If these blessings pertain to excellences (*Fada-il*) such as spending wealth on good [charitable] deeds, supererogatory charity, etc., competition in them and desiring them is highly praiseworthy. If there is a blessing that is [merely] permissible to benefit from, the competition in that and desiring that is also permissible. The justification for permissibility is that one desires equality and partaking in that blessing without considering the blessing as bad. Hence, there are two things here: first, respecting the person who has that blessing [and not desiring its downfall]; secondly, person desiring the same, has been left behind in that. However, desiring equality and competition with others on [merely] permissible things, causes a decrease in one's excellences because [even though it's permissible] these types of things are against trust in God (*Tawakkul*) and accepting the Divine decree (*Rada*) [that are lofty spiritual states] and are impediments in the path of higher spiritual degrees, although they do not amount to God's disobedience.

Degrees of Jealousy: There are degrees of jealousy [in terms of their severity and offence]. First degree is that one desires the downfall of a blessing from another person even though one does not attain that blessing [for oneself]. Only the evilest people are involved in this level of jealousy. Second degree of jealousy is that one desires the downfall of a blessing from another person so that one obtains that blessing for oneself, for example, a beautiful spouse, a magnificent house, great fame, and social standing. Third degree is that one does not desire a particular blessing but wants a similar blessing that another person has. Hence, when one fails to achieve that, one starts to desire its downfall from the other person so that both become equal. Fourth degree is that one desires a blessing that another person has but in case of failing to achieve it, does not desire its downfall from another person. This last degree is forgivable if blessing pertains to worldly matters and praiseworthy if it pertains to spiritual matters. Third degree has both the facets of good and evil in it. Second degree is lighter than the third. First degree is condemnable in all circumstances. Not desiring the downfall of a blessing from another is good but it is not good that one wants to own a blessing that another one has.

Causes of Jealousy

Although there are many reasons for jealousy but overall, they can be considered as depending on seven causes: First, enmity; second, desire for honor; third, arrogance;

fourth, surprise; fifth, fear of losing one's objectives; sixth, love of power (control) and fame; seventh, inner evil and stinginess of the soul. Sometimes, one does not want to see a blessing on another because other person is one's enemy and no one likes to see an enemy in comfort. Sometimes, self-aggrandizement and self-admiration of people endowed with blessings due to their pride and arrogance, becomes intolerable to one who does not want another to have any distinction over one, hence, one starts to have jealousy so that blessing is removed from another person so that both of them become equals. Sometimes, jealous person's heart has arrogance against another, but one cannot express that due to some distinction (blessings) that another person has. Sometimes, the blessing is so great, and rank is so lofty [for another person] that possessing that blessing and rank becomes a reason for [being] surprised. Sometimes, there is a fear that another person would become an obstacle in the way of one's objectives due to the blessings another person has. Sometimes, one is jealous with others due to one's failure in achieving control and power. Sometimes, there are none of these reasons, but one is jealous with others due to one's own inner evil and stinginess of the soul. Now listen to the details for each one of these causes [of jealousy]:

First Cause - Enmity and Rancor: This cause of jealousy is harsher than the other causes. Everyone who has been caused to suffer or obstacles placed in his or her objectives, becomes an opponent of the person causing the suffering or placing obstacles, considers such a one as bad, and rancor and anger prompts one for revenge. If one is not capable to taking revenge, one wants others to take the revenge [from the person causing one suffering or placing obstacles in one's path]. This is to such an extent that if the enemy is beset with worries and troubles, one construes it as a symbol of one's high rank and closeness to God, and if the enemy attains a blessing or some [high social] status against one's wishes, one construes it as being unaccepted in the Divine court that caused one's failure and enemy's victory. The upshot of this is that jealousy and enmity are essential to each other and go hand in hand. God-fear and caution demands that one should not allow such a jealousy to have a place in the heart and [always] consider it as bad. Jealousy is a fatal [inner] illness [of the soul]. God said:

إِن تَمْسَسْكُمْ حَسَنَةٌ تَسُؤْهُمْ وَإِن تُصِبْكُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَفْرَحُوا۟ بِهَا ۖ

"If you are in a good state, it is a cause of grief for them; and if a calamity befalls you, they are pleased with it." (Qur'an, Chapter 3, Verse 120)

وَدُّوا۟ مَا عَنِتُّمْ قَدْ بَدَتِ ٱلْبَغْضَآءُ مِنْ أَفْوَٰهِهِمْ وَمَا تُخْفِى صُدُورُهُمْ أَكْبَرُ

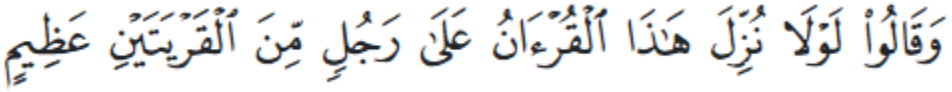
"They desire harm for you; enmity is evident from their mouths [in terms of what they

say] and what they have [hidden] in their hearts is far more [than that]." (Qur'an, Chapter 3, Verse 118)

The enmity born out of jealousy [at the level of nations or groups of people possessing distinction and power], usually ends up with bloodshed, war, and killings. One's entire life is spent on plotting the downfall of blessings from the person who is one's target of jealousy as one indulges in evils like tale-bearing, insult, backbiting, etc.

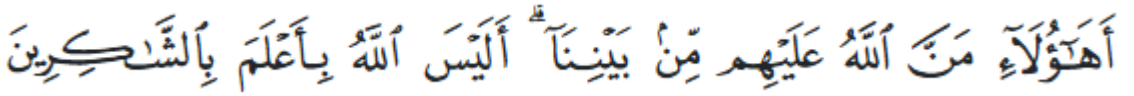
Second Cause – Desire for Honor or Prestige: Sometimes, jealousy is caused by not accepting the honor or distinction [due to some distinctive quality, ability, or skill] of someone who is [perceived as] one's equal. In other words, a jealous person does not want another person to express distinction over one after attaining some blessing. For example, if someone who is one's equal [in social standing] gets a high rank or wealth or knowledge, the jealous fears that such person may start expressing pride and arrogance over one, even though one does not want to be arrogant, one also does not want another person to be arrogant towards one. One agrees to another person's equality but does not agree with one's superiority.

Third Cause – Arrogance: Sometimes, cause of jealousy is that the jealous person considers others as humiliated, lowly, and inferior and desires that such a one remains under one's control while serving one and be actively ready to carry out one's command. If by any coincidence, other person finds a blessing, the jealous becomes perturbed by the fear that the other person might change due to the blessing, start to condemn one, refuse to obey one's commands, claim equality with one, or announce their own superiority over one thinking, "right now I am arrogant towards the other but other could now become arrogant towards me". This fear compels one to jealousy. These were the very reasons for [Mecca's] unbelievers' jealousy towards Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him), i.e., desire for honor and arrogance. It was their saying that how could this orphan boy become our leader and how is it possible that they submit to him [in his spiritual authority as the Messenger of God to the entire humanity who had very humble origins in orphanhood and poverty to begin with]. Qur'an reflected their thoughts in these words:



"Why was this Qur'an not descended (Divinely revealed) on some great man from these two towns?" (Qur'an, Chapter 43, Verse 31)

In other words, "If you had been a prominent man then we had no objection to following you". Likewise, the [tribe of] Quraish [that practically ruled Arabia] used to say this with great disdain:



"'Are these the [humble, lowly, poor] people (i.e., early Muslims struggling for their very survival in pagan Mecca) whom God has bestowed His blessings upon and excelled over all others?' Is it not the case that God knows who His grateful slaves are? (i.e., it

is God's decision whom He chooses to bestow His spiritual blessings upon, and God's blessings cannot be judged in material sense by plethora of wealth and power. Instead, God knows who His grateful servants are and it is them that God has chosen for His spiritual blessings of Divine intimacy, proximity, worship, guidance to truth and an inner spiritual illumination irrespective of their apparently low social standing, lack of any political power, and material poverty)." (Qur'an, Chapter 6, Verse 53)

Fourth Cause – Surprise: Being surprised by seeing someone at a high [social and/or spiritual] rank and status or in a good state, can also become a cause of jealousy. Qur'an says:

وَلَئِنْ أَطَعْتُمْ بَشَرًا مِّثْلَكُمْ إِنَّكُمْ إِذًا لَّخَاسِرُونَ

"If you start following [the teachings of] a human being like yourselves then no doubt you would be in a loss." (Qur'an, Chapter 23, Verse 34)

Fifth Cause – Fear of Losing One's Objectives: This is specific to only those who are striving for a singular objective. Hence, one is jealous of another on every such blessing that can be helpful in achieving one's objectives. [Example of] This type of jealousy includes two brothers (or siblings) having jealousy towards each other to win over the hearts of their parents, because attainment of property and honor depends on the approval of parents and everyone wants to win over their approval to become the sole owner of that property. Same is the state of two students of the same teacher as it is the effort of each of the two students to achieve maximum benefits [in the form of knowledge and education] by maximum service to the teacher. The mutual hate and enmity of the associates and companions of a king (or political authority) is because everyone wants to attain closeness to the king, a means of attaining fame and wealth. The preachers of the same city are jealous of each other because each one of them wants to be popular alone so that one can collect maximum amount of wealth.

Sixth Cause – Desire for Fame and Power: Sometimes, jealousy is due to the desire for fame and power. For example, if someone is unparalleled in some art or skill and desires that no one else attains the same expertise so that one remains popular, people praise one and are compelled to flatter one, consider him or her one of a kind in the world, and grant one big titles. There is no material purpose of such a person other than earning praise and popularity among people. In other words, one does not want to collect wealth or achieve some other purpose through one's art, skill, or expertise. Thus, such a one intrinsically likes sycophancy and wants people to remain dependent on one in that skill. If another person develops some expertise in the same skill, one gets jealous and finds other person's fame and equality [in the same skill] painful and desires other person to die and desires the downfall of the blessing that someone else partook of and ended one's uniqueness in that. For example, bravery, knowledge, worship, skill, beauty, wealth, etc., if possessed by one, is a cause of pride and if one is a sole owner of them then one's pride knows no bounds. The cause of jealousy [in this case] does not include desire for honor, arrogance, or fear of losing one's objective, instead, it's just the desire that the uniqueness one has in an art or skill remains with one [without anyone else getting a share of that].

Seventh Cause – Inner Evil or Depravity of the Self: The depravity of the lower self and stinginess of the heart regarding deeds of righteousness are big reasons for jealousy. You will easily find people who are not desirous of power, do not have arrogance, do not seek wealth, do not have the fear of losing their objectives. Despite that, if the state of another person is mentioned to them or they come to know that another person is enjoying a certain Divinely bestowed blessing, snakes will roll on their hearts (i.e., they would absolutely hate it). When they are told that a certain person is nowadays beset with worries and has failed to achieve one's objectives or is facing economic hardships, upon hearing that, such people of inner depravity will be pleased to the core of their hearts. Such people desire that no one succeeds, and they are so perturbed and bothered by seeing rewards from God raining down on others as if others have been bestowed these rewards after snatching them from their treasuries. It is said that "*Bakheel*" (miser) is a person who is miserly in one's own possessions and "*Shaheeh*" (one with a constricted heart) is a person who is miserly in other people's possessions (i.e., such a person does not wish well for others even though it is not costing one anything from one's own pocket). Such people are as if they are miserly in God's blessings and are jealous of those people who neither have any enmity towards them nor any contact. The ostensible cause of this is nothing but the depravity of the [lower] self (*Nafs*). It is the reaction of the inner depravity that has become one's second nature. Its cure is very difficult because all other causes of jealousy are temporary except for this cause, that cannot be eradicated as it is an inherent depravity. It is not there due to some temporary cause, that's why, its eradication is difficult.

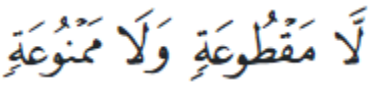
These are some causes engendering jealousy. Sometimes, all of these causes are found simultaneously in one person in which case the jealousy is big and is propelled with so much power that despite efforts and desire, cannot be concealed in the heart, instead one resorts to open enmity. Often, this is the state of those who are intrinsically jealous.

Upon deliberation, it's evident that all these causes of jealousy are due to love for the world (worldliness or material outlook on life) because world is the only thing that is not sufficient [no matter how much one has from it] for people who are in love with it - no matter how copious it gets, they complain about its shortage. Opposite to that, there is no shortage in the Hereafter, there is great capacity and expansiveness in things related to the Hereafter. The likeness of Hereafter is like that of knowledge as its circle is wide without bounds. If millions of people acquire knowledge of a certain thing, it does not decrease the slightest bit as every person takes full advantage of it and enjoys it to its fullest. Therefore, one who attains God's Gnosis (*Ma'rifa* or Divine knowledge and intimacy) and knowledge of Divine attributes, angels, prophets, the dominions of the heavens and the earth, does not get jealous with anyone else in this knowledge and Gnosis – if another acquires the same, there is no decrease [in one's own knowledge and Gnosis] - no matter how many people become Gnostics. Instead, the state of true Gnostics is such that they experience increasing spiritual happiness with increasing number of Gnostics out there. Hence, there is never any jealousy between true scholars of the Divine path (*Deen*) because their purpose is God's Gnosis [and the

Divine knowledge, closeness and intimacy that comes with it that in turn increase their spiritual degrees], which is a fathomless ocean without shores and there is no paucity in it - every diver can bring out the pearls from its bottom according to one's own strivings. They want to achieve God's intimacy with their Gnosis and there is no paucity in that either, as it is not the case with it, that some people get it and rest remain deprived of it. The most enjoyable blessing near God is the blessing of the Divine vision [as no other enjoyment of this world or the next compares to that] - there will be no obstacle or resistance to that – instead, all people [who attain it] will equally enjoy the Divine vision, rather the enjoyment of Divine vision will increase manifold due to the abundance of people [of Divine vision].

However, if [religious] scholars' objective is to attain wealth and fame through knowledge then they would necessarily harbor jealousy against each other. It is because, wealth is a material and physical thing - if it comes into one hand, someone else's hand would be devoid of it. Fame means becoming an owner of the hearts - when a person's heart is replete with respect and devotion to one scholar, it will necessarily be turned away from respect and devotion to another scholar - even if one still has devotion [to another scholar], it won't be much. This will certainly be a cause of jealousy. The difference between knowledge and wealth is that until the wealth leaves one hand, it does not reach another hand, whereas, the knowledge remains firmly ingrained in the heart of a scholar and it does not diminish through education and teaching. Instead, it transfers into the hearts of the students without getting diminished. Since, wealth and property are physical things, they come to an end at a certain point. If a human being becomes the owner of the whole earth, nothing will remain after that that one can still own. Opposite to that, there is no limit and end point of knowledge, nor is it possible to bound and limit it.

The upshot of this discussion is that whoever accustoms one's self to deliberation and contemplation into the Divine majesty, magnificence, grandeur and lordship and in the dominion of the heavens and the earth, this contemplation becomes so pleasurable and delectable that no other pleasure [of this worldly life] compares to that. That' why, one does not have any jealousy towards anyone even though the other person is at the same of degree of Divine Gnosis as one is. What is there that would reduce from one's own pleasure in that? Absolutely nothing! One will have even more attachment to that [deliberation and contemplation that in turn leads to God's Gnosis, closeness, and intimacy]. The pleasure experienced by those who contemplate in the wonders and splendors of God's dominion, is greater than the pleasure of those who witness the gardens of paradise, its fruits, and flowers with the external eyes. The paradise of the Gnostic is God's Gnosis. This paradise never suffers extinction. A Gnostic forever plucks delicious fruits from its lush green trees and nourishes one's soul with this ennobled luscious nourishment. These are the fruits that are described in Divine words as:



"[Such fruits that are bestowed from Divine munificence and largesse] Will never come to an end and one will not be, in any way, restrained from them." (Qur'an, Chapter 56, Verse 33)

قُطُوفُهَا دَانِيَةٌ

"Its fruits will be low hanging [ready for plucking with perfect ease for one's utmost satisfaction]." (Qur'an, Chapter 69, Verse 23)

If a Gnostic closes one's external eyes, is still able to witness the paradise with the soul and tours its gardens. If we suppose a large number of Gnostics, then there is no question of mutual jealousy among them. This is their state in the [life of the] world. It can be deduced from this what will happen when the veil is lifted in the Hereafter and one has the honor of witnessing the Beloved. It is known from this that there will be no evil called "jealousy" in the paradise. It is also known from this that those who are [going to be the] denizens of paradise, do not harbor jealousy even here [in their earthly existence] because there is neither paucity or constriction of any type in paradise nor is there any impediment. Paradise will be a means to attain God's Gnosis and none can become an impediment to another in [the path of] Divine Gnosis. Hence, there is no need for people of Paradise to have jealousy - they have no need to do that either in this world or the next - as it is such a condemnable trait that causes a human being to fall from the highest of the high (*'Aala 'Illiyeen*) to the lowest of the low (*Asfal us-Safileen*) [in spiritual degrees with implications and reverberations in one's worldly life].

It is also proven from these details that jealousy pertains to those objectives that are limited - if one achieves them, another one becomes deprived of them. That's why, you see that people are not jealous of each other in enjoying the adornment of the [wide expanse of the] sky, instead they are jealous of each other in strolling the gardens even though gardens are a small part of this wide expansive earth, and earth with all of its wideness is very insignificant and lowly compared to the sky. Since sky is so much wider that if all the people of the world start to look at it simultaneously, it will suffice everyone, and every person can enjoy it according to one's power of observation.

If you have true inner insight (*Baseerah*) and are kind and benevolent towards your self (*Nafs*), then you should be seeking the blessing that has no effort and pleasure that has no extinction, and such a pleasure belongs to the blessings (Gnosis) of God's Being or Entity (*Dhat*), [Divine] qualities (*Sifaat*) and [Divine] actions (*Af'aal*). If you neither desire God's Gnosis nor want to get a taste of it or your desire is weak, then you are excused from it because a non-discerning child does not have desire for dominion and [political] authority - they are only comprehended and appreciated by grown up adults. Similarly, the [immense spiritual] pleasure of God's Gnosis is comprehended by only those for whom below verse [of Qur'an] was revealed:

رِجَالٌ لَّا تُلْهِيهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَن ذِكْرِ ٱللَّهِ

"Those are the people [of firm resolve and determination] who do not get dissuaded from Divine remembrance due to buying or selling (i.e., all forms of maintaining or

earning a livelihood or means of living and survival in the worldly life)." (Qur'an, Chapter 24, Verse 37)

The stage of intense desire (*Shawq*) comes after getting a taste of it. One who has not even tasted [God's Gnosis] will not even be a seeker of it and will not be able to even comprehend it. Such an individual will eventually fell into the abyss [of immense deprivation and loss due to returning empty handed to one's true origin and homeland without using the precious opportunity of worldly life to attain its true purpose and consequent eternal happiness and everlasting success] with other deprived souls.

Medicine for Curing Jealousy

Jealousy is among the greatest diseases of the heart and the cure of the diseases of the heart is only possible by means of knowledge and action. The profitable knowledge about this disease of jealousy for you is to know that jealousy is harmful in both this world and the next, but this harm will be inflicted only on the one harboring jealousy and nothing wrong will happen to the person [or a collective group of people] you are being jealous of. Neither his or her world will be destroyed nor the religion, instead, such a one will benefit from your jealousy. If you know this by insight, you will neither be an enemy to your own self (*Nafs*) nor a friend of its real enemy and you will certainly avoid [falling into the trap of] jealousy.

Jealousy's Harm to One's Path to God: Jealousy's harm to one's path to God (*Deen*) is that one achieves God's displeasure as you express disliking of God's distribution of His bounties to His servants and you lift your finger (object) at God's justice that He has established in His dominion by means of His concealed (secret) wisdom [that ordinary people are not privy to]. This is a grave crime [to object to Divine distribution and becoming jealous of people for what they have]; there can be no greater crime than this within the bounds of God's oneness (*Tawheed*) and faith in Divine eternal verities (*Iman*). Other than that, you wished evil for a believer while you should have wished well. You adopted remoteness from the group of prophets and friends and intimates of God (*Awliya*) - these people are friends to and sincere with the servants of God (humanity). Jealousy is an evil of the heart as it devours righteousness and righteous acts like fire consuming wood and brings it to extinction as night devours the day.

Jealousy's Harm to One's Worldly Life: Jealousy's harm in this world is that you are continuously afflicted with pain whenever a blessing descends on the person you are jealous with. Snake rolls over your heart (an allegory for hate) when the person who is target of one's jealousy is seen in comfort, as your blood boils and you start strategizing the downfall of these blessings. When you feel helpless to do anything about it, you become an embodiment of sorrow, remorse, regret and shame - in this manner you do nothing but accumulate worries and hardships for yourself while nothing bad happens to the person who is the target of your jealousy. Suppose you do not have certitude about

resurrection after death, accountability on the Day of Judgment, reward and punishment [after Divine accountability], even then [your own personal common sense and] intelligence demands that you refrain from jealousy because you achieve nothing through it except heart's sorrow and pain. If you have certitude about intense punishment of the Hereafter, you should then do your utmost to refrain from it. It seems somewhat strange about a person of intellect, that one buys God's displeasure without any material benefit. What can there be a benefit from jealousy? Only the opposite happens in the form of damage, loss and accumulation of continuous punishment and pain for the heart – one's path to God (*Deen*) and worldly life (*Dunya*) both get destroyed and one remains empty handed. Cast a glance at the one you are jealous of and look at his or her state! Is your jealousy causing any damage to such a one? If you ponder, you will get the answer in negative. Neither one's worldly life (*Dunya*) will be damaged nor the path to God (*Deen*) because the blessings one possesses, will not decline due to your jealousy, instead they will remain till the time God has destined for them. God says:

وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ عِندَهُۥ بِمِقْدَارٍ

"Everything is apportioned and appointed by God with a certain measure." (Qur'an, Chapter 13, Verse 8)

One prophet entreated to God about an empress who used to rule over a nation with oppression. It was revealed to him, "There is no chance of any change to what has been Divinely destined from eternity, and she will certainly receive whatever elevation and blessings that are destined for her. Be patient so that this epoch passes that has been destined for her [so that a new era will dawn after this epoch as a harbinger of better times for you as a reward for your patience and perseverance]". It is learned from this [example] that blessing does not dissipate with jealousy and the [person who is the] target of your jealousy does not face any loss, and if you think that the blessing can dissipate because of your jealousy then it is the height of ignorance and is [tantamount to] enmity with your own self (*Nafs*). If it's your desire that due to your jealousy, the blessings of all [of God's] creations get removed and your own blessings do not get removed due to other's jealousy towards you then this desire is also pure ignorance. It is because you do not have any specialty due to which you get preferred over others. It is such a great Divine blessing that jealousy does not eradicate anyone's blessing. You should be grateful to God over this great blessing but alas, you do not appreciate it through your own actions.

As far as the profit of one who is the target of your jealousy is concerned, it is very clear that one receives profits in this world and the next. The benefit to path to God (*Deen*) or religion is that one who is the target of jealousy becomes oppressed because of you, especially at a time when your jealousy comes out from your heart to your tongue or is revealed through some action of yours, for example, when you backbite, lift your finger on one's dignity, curse or beat (harm) one. These are all the gifts whom you present to the person who is target of your jealousy, in other words, you hand over your good deeds to such person to the extent [of your jealousy] then when you will meet him or her on the Day of Judgment, you will have nothing left in your account except regrets and

deprivations - you will be deprived of blessings there as you were in your worldly life. You desired for the downfall of his or her blessings, but they stayed intact. Furthermore, one obtained the blessings of your good deeds transferring into his or her account of good deeds - this person will have received blessings and you will get misfortunes. Along with that, you gave the enemy of humanity, Satan, an opportunity to be happy. This is because, Satan fears that you would start loving the people you perceive as your enemies - those who have the qualities of knowledge, pious awe, reverence and fear of God - so that you receive a share in their Divine recompense [for these noble qualities]. Satan desires that just like you are deprived of good, you become deprived of the love for the good. A desert Arab asked Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him): "O Messenger of God! A certain man loves the group of righteous people even though he is not from among them". He replied:

المرءمع من احب

"One will be with the person [or group of people] one loves". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Abdullah bin Mas'ud [May God be pleased with him])

Jealousy is a sin in its own right. One should look into the things that are engendered by it like disagreements, refusal to accept the truth, and freedom to use vulgarity of tongue and hand to take revenge from an enemy. This is a disease that caused the destruction of previous nations.

The knowledge-based cure of jealousy is that one acts against the purport of jealousy, whether it is something spoken or an action. Therefore, if jealousy prompts one to condemn the victim of one's jealousy, one should try to praise him or her [instead]. If jealousy prompts one to have arrogance towards one's enemy, one should keep oneself humble in front of one's enemy and be ready to apologize when needed; if it prompts one to giving or rewarding [the person perceived as an enemy], one should give even more, even if one has to force oneself and compel one's heart, as there is nothing wrong with it. When the person who is target of one's jealousy sees these things, it will bring happiness and will start to love one and when there is love from such a person, the jealous will also be compelled to love in return. Mutual love will engender harmony that will in turn eradicate jealousy. Humility, praise, expressing happiness on [someone else's] blessings, causes the heart of the blessed to get pulled and inclined towards the person making that effort [albeit jealousy, in order to counter it within one's soul] and becomes like a servant and starts to deal with one kindly and to treat one well. This excellence in behavior [from the person who was a target of one's jealousy] returns back to the person with jealousy, making one's heart pleased who first strived for excellence but later it became one's habit and temperament (second nature that does things naturally and effortlessly). Satan's deception should not dissuade you from this path that if you deal with the one who is target of your jealousy, with humility and praise then one will consider you weak, lowly, hypocrite and fearful. Satan deceives in this manner to destroy human beings. Treating an enemy well, whether it is done naturally or compulsively, eradicates the basis of enmity and replaces it with love on both sides and they get relieved of the pain and punishment of jealousy.

These are the medicines of jealousy and their benefits cannot be denied. However, hearts find their taste bitter, but the bitter medicine is the one that is more beneficial. One who does not exercise patience at the bitterness of a medicine, does not find the sweetness of cure. Tolerating this bitter medicine will become easy when one ponders over the knowledge-based and practical methods of cure and understands that to accept the Divine decrees and being a seeker for Divine recompense, leads one to one's very eternal happiness and endless success (*Sa'ada*). Thinking that nothing in the world should happen against my wishes and something being against [my desires] is against the self-respect and dignity of my own self (*Nafs*), is pure ignorance. If this [mistaken] thought gets firmly ingrained in the heart, its consequence would be that it would desire the death of all of one's [perceived] enemies so that not even a slightest bit of opposition [to oneself] remains. Furthermore, it would want that nothing happens against my wishes and everything happens according to my desires, although it is impossible and one will be jealous of the enemies upon one's failure [to have everything happen according to one's desires] and final conclusion of this would be one's utter humiliation and abasement. There are two ways of avoiding this humiliation: first, what you desire happens, and second, whatever happens becomes your desire. First method is not in one's control and there is no room for striving in that, however, spiritual striving will work for the second method. By means of intense spiritual striving, it is possible that one's heart become devoid of intention and desire [to want things happen according to one's desires] and makes oneself subservient to the Divine will. Acquiring this [second] method is imperative for an intelligent and wise individual [in order to attain inner peace, tranquility, happiness, eternal bliss and endless triumph].

Chapter 6 - Attachment to Worldly life, Possessions and Power, and Making it the Purpose of One's Life

Attachment of the heart to the worldly life and considering it to be the real thing, or the biggest thing or the only thing that matters, paves the way for setting aside all moral and ethical restraints and considerations, and fighting for it all the way, for matters that are trivial and inconsequential in overall scheme of things. This thought process is at both the individual level and at the collective level of entire nations. At individual level, it clouds one's perspective on what's real and important in one's life, causing intense stress on one's inner and outer being. This ensures a rat race, intense competition for limited resources and an unnecessary struggle that consumes the entire lives of individuals in futile endeavors that consume the best capital one has which is the time. On the other hand, detachment to worldly life, leads to putting everything in correct perspective, liberating one's mind, body, intellect and soul from being consumed in futile inconsequential endeavors that consume the biggest capital one has, which is the limited time of one's life. Detachment from attachment to worldly life fosters inner peace, tranquility, peace with oneself and peace with all fellow human beings. A *Sufi* sage has said, "When I think of world and worldly life as great, I feel I am a mere atom in the cosmos. But when I think of worldly life as small then I find that the world is an atom in the cosmos, and I am the master of this cosmos!" This detachment is a liberating force propelling one to a higher level of consciousness that imbues peace within and without. One learns to share instead of practicing stinginess, care as opposed to obliviousness, and selflessness as opposed to selfishness. Ghazali expounds the reasons behind attachment to worldly life, harms caused by it, and cure for this disease that liberates one's mind, body, intellect, and soul to pursue higher level of consciousness. Ghazali's sixth book in the third volume or quarter of his *magnum opus* "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God", deals with this and prescribes remedies for it. Contents of this book by Ghazali are presented here in condensed form as follows [12]:

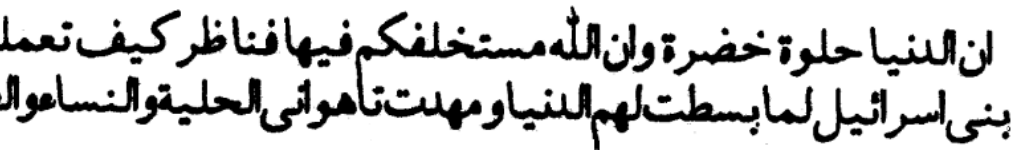
Worldliness is an adversary of God, adversary of God's friends and also an adversary of God's deniers and opponents. It is an adversary of God as it does not allow servants of God (i.e., all human beings) to tread the path of rectitude and correct guidance. It is an adversary of friends and intimates of God (Gnostics and saints) as it appears before them decked with bedizenments and tries to entice them with being full of life and beauty, so they get entrapped in its net of deception. To get liberated from its entrapments, they have to gulp bitter draughts of patience. Its enmity with God's deniers and opponents is that it has entrapped them in its net of deception by

befriending them, by showing them green pastures until they have come firmly in its grip and when they become confident of it, it envelops them in humiliation - if they manage to avoid the humiliation in this world, they will not be able to get rid of the humiliation and shame of the Hereafter. They will be deprived of the eternal bliss and endless triumph of the eternity when they leave the world, they will be anguished by the pain of its separation; when they will be inflicted with the torment of the Hereafter, they will call out regretful cries for help but world ("world" in this book does not mean "world" per se but rather it refers to worldliness or worldly attachments; this needs to be constantly kept in mind for ensuing discussion) will not come to their rescue.

When such is the state of world's (worldly attachments') evil and afflictions that it is neither a friend of God, nor a friend of friends of God (Gnostics, saints and intimates of God), what's more perplexing is that it is not even a friend of God's adversaries, then it becomes imperative for us to become aware of its reality and to find out the [Divine] wisdom for its creation, even though it is an adversary of the Creator and the creations. We should then see how it deceives and what methods it employs to spread evil (anxiety, turbulence and turmoil) because unless we become aware of the entry points of evil, we will not be able to protect ourselves from it, instead, it will not be surprising if we get drawn into it. In the following chapters, first the harms of worldliness will be explained from Divine verses, prophetic narrations and traditions and their reality will be clarified by means of examples, then details about worldly actions will be provided as to why when people get involved into them, they become heedless and negligent of Divine remembrance, followed by the exposition for the cure of worldly attachments.

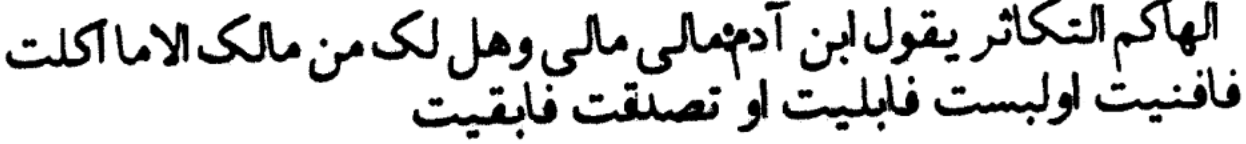
Qur'an has condemned worldliness at innumerable places and the audience have been commanded to avoid it and [instead,] direct themselves to their Lord, the Benevolent. The purpose of sending prophets, upon whom be peace, is to dissuade the servants of God (people) from worldly attachments to make them tread the path of the Hereafter. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

"Love of the world (worldly attachments and entanglements) is the root of all sins". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Ibn Abi al-Dunya* and *Bayhaqi*)



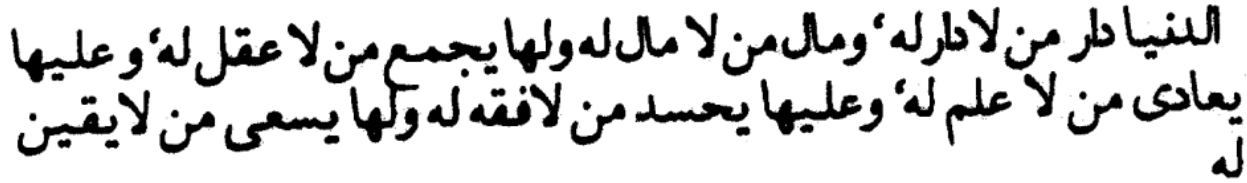
"World is sweet and green, and God makes you His vicegerent in it to see what kind of actions and deeds you do [herein]. When world was expanded for Children of Israel, they became astonished with jewelry, women, perfume, and clothes". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Tirmidhi* and *Ibn Majah* on the authority of Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri [May God be pleased with him]. That narration did not have the part about Children of Israel that was narrated by *Ibn Abi al-Dunya* on the authority of Hasan [May God be pleased with him])

Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said: “Do not make the world your owner, it will make you its slave. Keep your treasure as a trust with someone who will not squander it and will safeguard it. Possessor of worldly treasuries is afraid of theft all the times. One who has one’s treasures with God, has no fear of any kind”. Once he said: “O disciples! I have turned world upside down for you. Do not pick it up after me. It is from among the evils of the world that human being disobeys God for the sake of this world, although, until one leaves the world, one does not get the Hereafter. If you want Hereafter, then live as if world is just a passageway and do not inhabit it and know that root for every sin is the love of the world. Sometimes, a moment of lust becomes the cause of sorrow for a long time”. Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) also said: “World is both a seeker and is also sought. The seeker of the Hereafter is sought by the world so they can complete acquiring their sustenance [that God has already apportioned for each and every individual by His Divine decree]. Seeker of the world is sought by the Hereafter until one dies and it starts to ride on its neck”. It has come in a tradition that Prophet Solomon, son of Prophet David (Peace and blessings of God be upon them both) went to visit a worshipper along with his army. Towards his right and left, *Jinns* and human formed rows and birds were shading him from the top. The worshipper said: “O son of David! God has bestowed upon you a great dominion”. Prophet Solomon (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said: “One rosary’s worth of Divine remembrance from the actions of a believer is better than all the world that has been bestowed upon the son of David. It is because what son of David possesses, will come to an end while the Divine remembrance will last [forever]”. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:



“Greed of excess kept you in negligence and heedlessness [of God]. Son of Adam (human being) says, ‘My wealth! My wealth!’, even though what [truly] belongs to you is what you ate or made it old by wearing it or gave away in charity [and hence were able to preserve it”. (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Abdullah ibn Al-Shakheer [May God be pleased with him])

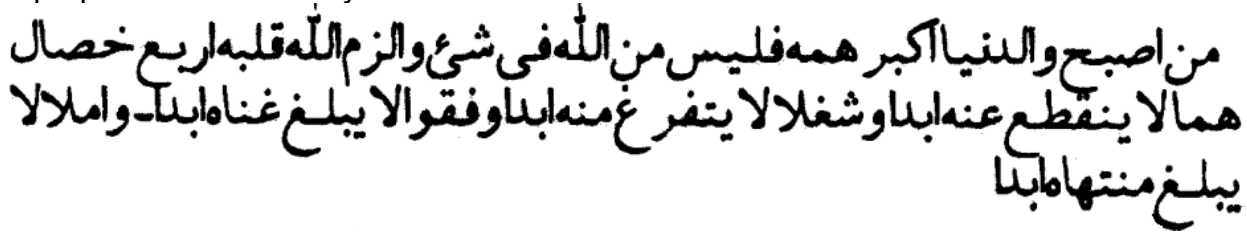
Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) also said:



“World is the home for one who does not have a home; material possession of one who does not have any possession [from spiritual excellence]. One who accumulates the world is the one who does not have intellect, and fights (argues) over what one has no knowledge of, and practices jealousy with one who does not possess intellect, and continues to strive for it since one does not have certitude”. (This tradition has been

narrated in *Hadith* collection *Musnad Ahmed* on the authority of Aisha [May God be pleased with her])

A prophetic narration says:


من اصبح والدنيا اكبر همه فليس من الله في شئ والزم الله قلبه اربع خصال
هما لا ينقطع عنه ابدا وشغلا لا يتفرغ منه ابدا وفقرا لا يبلغ غناه ابدا- وامالا
يبلغ منتهاه ابدا

"One whose [inner] state is such that world (worldly materialistic ambitions and goals) becomes one's biggest objective [in life], such a person becomes devoid of Godliness and God makes four traits necessary for the heart of such a one: sorrow that never separates, constant engagements [in worldly activities] that do not allow any respite, poverty (sense of not having enough) that never reaches affluence [to the point one becomes satisfied with having enough], and long hopes that are never fulfilled". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Tabarani Awsat* on the authority of Abu Dharr [May God be pleased with him] and *Ibn Abi al-Dunya* on the authority of Anas bin Malik [May God be pleased with him])

Jesus, son of Mary (Peace and blessings of God be upon them both) said: "It is surprising for someone from this world that one gets deceived by it even while having certainty about death and dies leaving behind everything, world humiliates one but one is [still] fearless of it and relies on it; great misfortune is for those who get deceived, those whom world shows them what they dislike to see and separates them from their beloved things [of this world]. Regret is for those people whose objective is the world, whose actions are sins, how humiliated they will be on account of their sins". A Divine revelation came to Prophet Moses (Peace and blessings of God be upon him): "O Moses! What do you have to do with this abode (world) of oppressors? This abode is certainly not yours. Do not make it a center (focal point) of your thoughts and imaginations. Remove your heart from it and distance your intellect from it that it is your home. However, if someone acts righteous in this abode, it will be a good home for such a one. I am [ever] watchful of oppressors until I take revenge [from them] for the oppressed". It has been narrated in a Prophetic tradition that Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) sent Abu Ubaidah ibn al-Jarrah (May God be pleased with him) to a journey [for tax collection] to Bahrain. When he returned, he brought some money (in the form of gold and silver coins that were prevalent at that time) with him. Ansari companions (original residents of Medina and its vicinities) heard of the return of Abu Ubaidah ibn al-Jarrah (May God be pleased with him) and that he has brought back some money. They all participated in the early morning prayers [as they normally did every day] with the Prophet. When he was returning [home] after prayers, they stood in his way. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) smiled when he saw them then said:

انا اظنكم سمعتم ان ابا عبيدة قدم بشئ، قالوا اجل يا رسول الله! قال: فابشروا واملوا ما يسركم فوالله ما الفقر اخشى عليكم ولكنى اخشى عليكم ان تنبسط عليكم الدنيا كما بسطت على ما كان قبلكم فتنا فسوها كما تنا فسوها فتهلككم كما اهلكتهم

"I think you have heard that Abu Ubaidah brought something". Companions replied: "Yes, O Messenger of God!" He said: "There are glad tidings for you that God has removed hardships from you. By God! I am not afraid of you becoming destitute but I am afraid that world will be expanded for you [in terms of you becoming wealthy and affluent] as it was for people before you and that you start competing with each other [for worldly gains] and that the world (worldliness) destroys you as it destroyed them". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Amr Badri [May God be pleased with him])

Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said: "No one can build a building on waves of the sea. World is also like waves of the sea, do not think of it as your abode". Some companions of Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) asked him to give them an advice that will make them deserving of God's love after acting on it. He replied: "Stop loving the world, God will start loving you". Abu Darda (May God be pleased with him) narrated that Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

لو تعلمون ما اعلم لضحكتم قليلا ولبكيتم كثيرا ولهانت عليكم الدنيا ولاثرتم الاخرة

"If you knew what I know, you would laugh less and weep more and world will become diminutive to you and you would prefer the Hereafter". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Tirmidhi* and *Ibn Majah*)

After that, Abu Dharr (May God be pleased with him - prophetic companion who was renowned for his renunciation of worldliness) added from himself: "If you knew what I know, you would leave for the mountains weeping and crying and would leave all your possessions and wealth and run away and not use them without extreme necessity. However, Hereafter has vanished from your hearts and greed for worldly possessions and properties is ever present [in your hearts]. Whatever acts [of righteousness] you perform, are for the sake of the world and you have become like those who know nothing. Some of you are worse than cattle that do not think first about the consequences before committing evil. What has happened to you that you neither practice mutual love nor sincerity towards each other even though you are all connected to the relationship of brotherhood in the path to God (*Deen*)? Your inner evil has created differences in your objectives and have made your paths separated. If you had all agreed upon righteousness, you all would have loved each other. What has happened to you that you are sincere to each other in worldly matters but are not sincere to each other in matters related to the Hereafter. Those whom you love, you do

not help them in matters related to the Hereafter. These are all indications of the weakness of faith. If you had certitude in the good and evil of the Hereafter like you have the certitude of this world, you would have struggled for the Hereafter that helps you with good in all matters.

If you say that you love what's near you (the worldly life) more than what's remote (the life of the Hereafter) because world is in front of your eyes while Hereafter is concealed from your eyes, what's present is loved and what's not present is not loved; the response to that is that we see that you leave worldly things that are present for the sake of those things that are yet to come (expected) - you work hard and things that are not in front of you but there is a glimmer of hope that you will get them, for them you bear various types of hardships and worries. You are not good people as you do not have certitude on what constitutes as the perfection of faith. If you have doubt about the Divine law brought by Prophet [Muhammad] (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) then come to us, we will tell you and with the light of faith, we will show you the [spiritual] realities that will satisfy your hearts. By God, you are not people of faulty intellect so that we consider you exempted [from moral responsibility to differentiate between the right and the wrong]. In worldly matters, your opinion is solid and if you get a tiny bit of the world, your happiness knows no bounds. When a slightest thing from the world is lost, your state of sorrow is worth seeing - your faces become a reflection of your hearts and your tongues express what's in your hearts. You call it hardship. There are many among you who have bid farewell to your religion (*Deen* or path to God) but your hearts are neither regretful nor is it evident from your faces. There is a strange desensitization [in your hearts]. It seems to me that God is displeased with you. When you meet with each other, you force yourselves to express happiness simply because of the fear that if you are rude, the other person will treat you the same. You are forgetful of your own mortality (end of life). I desire that God grants me ease from you (make me separated away from you) and instead, join me to those whose meeting I eagerly desire (i.e., Prophet Muhammad [Peace and blessings of God be upon him], his noble companions and sincere seekers of God in their footsteps). If they had been alive today, they would not have accepted these things from you. If you have any element of good within yourselves then I have explained everything with clarity. If you want to achieve that is with God, its method is not difficult. I seek God's help with help and aid for myself and yourself".

Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) told his disciples: "Be contented with little world with safety of your religion, just like people of the world are contended with little religion with the safety of the world". Ali (May God be pleased with him) said: "One who has instilled six qualities in one's inner being, left no stone unturned in obtaining [God's acceptance that is manifested by the attainment of] the paradise and safeguarding oneself from [God's disapproval that in manifested by] the hell: First quality is that one obeyed God after recognizing Him, second is that one disobeyed Satan after recognizing him, third is that one followed the truth after recognizing it, fourth is that one avoided falsehood after recognizing it, fifth is that one rejected the worldliness after recognizing it, and sixth is that one sought the Hereafter after recognizing it". Luqman (Peace be upon him – sage at the time of Prophet David

[Peace and blessings of God be upon him]), the wise, admonishing his son said: "O son! World is like a deep sea in which many people have drowned; travel through it on the ship of God-fear, make faith your travelling companion, trust in God as your sail, perhaps you will save yourself from drowning this way, otherwise I do not see any other way of your survival". Abu Suleiman al-Darani (May God have mercy upon him) said: "One who seeks the world with love, does not get according to one's desire, and one who is a seeker of the Hereafter with love, gets more than one's intention and desire - there is neither any end to it nor is there any limit". Abdullah bin Mas'ud (May God be pleased with him) said: "Every human being is a guest and whatever material possession and wealth one has is a trust; the guest will leave and the trust will return to its [true] owner [God, who is the inheritor of this earth and everything that exists in it and beyond it]". Ibrahim bin Adham (May God have mercy upon him) was asked about his state to which he responded with these two verses of poetry:

نرقع دنيانا بتمزيق ديننا فلا ديننا يبقى ولا مانرقع
فطوبى لعبد اثر الله ربه وجاد بدنياه لما يتوقع

"We destroy our path to God (*Deen* or faith) to build our world but neither the path (faith) remains nor the world. Glad tidings are for those servants [of God] who adopted the [path to the] Lord and sacrificed their worldly life for the sake of the expected thing (Divine recompense of the Hereafter)".

Abdullah bin Abbas (May God be pleased with him) said: "God has divided world into three parts - one part is for the believer, one part for the hypocrite, and one part for the unbeliever. Believer takes from this world a reliance (provision) for the path of the Hereafter, hypocrite focusses attention on the outer embellishment [of this world] and unbeliever achieves worldly success [in terms of material achievements, power, prestige and opulence]".

Hasan al-Basri (May God have mercy upon him) wrote [a letter] to [Caliph] Umar bin Abdul Aziz (May God have mercy upon him) saying: "World is a destination in the journey [to eternity] and it is not a place to stay [permanently]. Adam (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) was sent to the world as a punishment, that's why, protect yourself from it (its deceptions and entrapments). O Commander of Believers! Abandoning it (i.e., the worldliness with all its snares) is the very provision of the Hereafter and spending life in it with less and abandoning unnecessary wants is the very opulence [for an individual]. It kills every moment all the time. One who respects it, gets humiliated by it. One who accumulates it, is made needy by it. It is like a poison that is unknowingly consumed causing one to reach the embrace of death. Live your life in this world like one who treats one's wounds. In other words, hold fast to all precautions and preventions that are necessary for a patient during treatment out of the fear that carelessness may lead to the severity of illness. A patient should try to tolerate the bitterness and intensity of medicine, for the sake of avoiding the prolongation of illness. Safeguard yourself from this non-lasting, disloyal, cunning, and deceptive world. It has concealed deception in its adornment. It entraps people in the net of its beauty and induces in them the desire to achieve it, then its lovers are hunted down in its

turmoil and hardships that they lose consciousness and get completely belonged (attached) to it, without caring for their own final end. It's like a bride whose beauty dazzles the sights, hearts are desirous of seeing it, and are perturbed to get a glance of it, but it is a messenger of the final ending for its lovers. One who finds its closeness, destruction becomes one's destiny. Alas! Now people neither derive lessons from the past nor from the present. Those who recognize God also do not heed any advice related to the world. There are many lovers of God who become proud when they get some part of it and become hell bent on rebellion [against Divine injunctions], forget the Hereafter and get themselves so engrossed [in it], that they cannot avoid mistakes. When they return to consciousness, they feel ashamed and regret pulls the heart but this is the time of the impending demise - on one hand, one is facing the intensity of death and on the other hand, enduring the pain of shame and regret. An individual who is inclined towards the world (worldliness) is neither able to achieve one's purpose nor comfort the self (*Nafs*) from any hardship and arrives [at one's final homeland] without any provision and preparation. O Commander of Believers! Protect yourself from it. When you are increasingly happy with it, stay extra cautious because when worldly people become satisfied with some happiness, it envelops them in hardship. One who stays happy in it, gets deceived. One who is benefiting today will endure loss tomorrow. The expansiveness of the worldly life is a harbinger of sufferings and subsistence in it ends with extinction. Its every happiness is replete with sorrow. One who goes far from it, does not return [to it]. One who lives in it, knows not what will happen next so one could have waited for it. Human being is surrounded by two dangers while living here - one danger is that blessings will depart, and second danger is of hardships. Suppose if God had not informed us about the [harms of the] world and if God had not revealed the reality by examples, [the circumstances faced by one are] sufficient to wake a negligent person up from slumber. However, God had not left us without any help, instead He has sent towards them admonishers. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) was presented with the keys to the treasuries of the world; if he had accepted them, his rank would not have diminished but he [still] refused to accept them". (This tradition has been narrated with this letter and its reply by Hasan al-Basri (May God have mercy upon hm) by *Ibn Abi al-Dunya*)

Protecting Against the Harms of the World after Indulging in it

Safeguarding against the harms of worldliness after immersing in it is not only difficult but rather, it is impossible. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessing of God be upon him) said:

انما مثل صاحب الدنيا كالماشي في الماء هل يستطيع الذي يمشي في الماء ان لا تبتل قدماه

"The similitude of a person of this world is like of a person who walks in water. Is it possible for one walking in water to not get the feet wet?" (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Ibn Abi al-Dunya* and *Bayhaqi* on the authority of Anas [May God be pleased with him])

In the light of this prophetic tradition, the ignorance of those becomes clear who say: "Our bodies [only] indulge in worldly pleasures but our hearts don't, as our hearts have no link with the bodies". This is a satanic deception because if they are distanced from these pleasures, they become saddened in their separation from them. If these pleasures have no connection with their hearts, then what is the meaning of this sorrow? Just like the meaning of walking in water is that the feet will necessarily get wet, similarly the meaning of indulging in worldly pleasures is that the heart will necessarily get influenced [by it] and impact of pollutants from these [bodily] pleasures will certainly reach the heart. Rather, if heart has even a slightest bit of thought of this world, even then one will get deprived of the sweetness of the Divine worship. Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said: "I tell you the truth that just like a sick person does not enjoy food, similarly, a worldly person does not taste the sweetness of [Divine] worship. I also say this to you in truth that just like a horse not ridden anymore, becomes rebellious and its temperament becomes bad, similarly the human heart is like that - if it is not softened with remembrance of death and hardship of worship, hardness and harshness is born in it. This is also true that until a container becomes separated from wetness and dried up, it is not capable of storing honey, similarly hearts are replete with wisdom and Gnosis until they remain separated from lusts and not get polluted with greed and hard with pleasures".

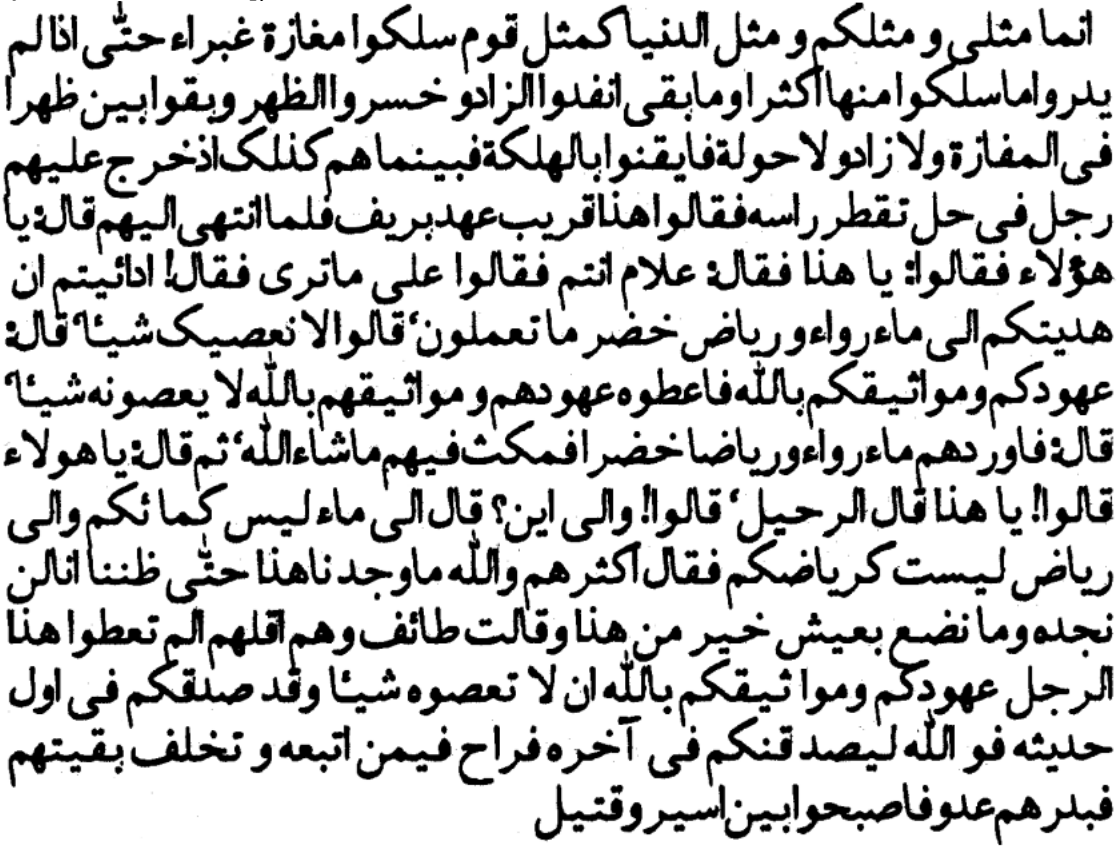
A Parable of Indulgence in the World and Negligence of the Hereafter: The parable of negligence of the denizens of the world towards the Hereafter is of a group of people travelling on a ship that reaches a remote island and captain of the ship telling them to disembark to fulfill their needs. Along with that, they are informed that it is not suitable to stay at that place for long as it's a dangerous place and if they don't hurry up, the ship will sail towards its destination. Now people disembark on the island and get dispersed. Some among them return to the ship immediately after fulfilling their needs and find wide, suitable, and desirous places on the ship. Some people stay in the island. They are allured by the splendid scenery, attractive flowers, magnificent gardens, beautiful songs of the birds, precious stones and minerals belonging to the island. However, the fear of ship sailing away does not allow them to stay there for too long. Grudgingly, they return to the ship, however, good spots on the ship have already been taken and they find narrow places that they have no choice but to take. Some people returned; however, they liked the precious stones, beautiful flowers, and delicious fruits from the island so much that they could not return without them. They collected some of these things and brought them back with them. The space in the ship was already tight and the things they brought with them could not be accommodated. They were forced to sit in the remaining tight spots in the ship with their collected stuff placed on their head. They kept feeling ashamed in their hearts that they unnecessarily brought these things with them. Some people [from among the passengers] had their eyes getting dazzled and hearts becoming enamored and fascinated by the magnificent colorful sceneries and previous jewels of the island, that they totally forgot about the ship and went so deep in the island that they could not even hear the voice of the captain [summoning them back to the ship before its impending departure]. They were so engrossed in eating fruits, smelling flowers, and touring the luscious gardens that even if the voice of

the captain had reached them, they still could not have heard it, or if they had heard it, they could not have paid attention to it. Even though they had the fear in their hearts for the ferocious beasts and understood that there could be tribulations, worries and hardships in the island, thorns that shred the clothes, trees that injure the body, horrors and dreadful sounds that would tremble the hearts and if then they would want to return, they would not be able to. While they were perplexed in these thoughts, they heard the voices of the people on the ship. They hurriedly loaded themselves with food and jewels and went towards the ship but by then, the ship had lifted its anchor and disembarked to sail forth. These people stood at the coast disappointed and dejected and died with fear and horror. Some people [who remained behind] could not even hear the call of the captain - some among them became food for the beasts and some died roaming around worried and perplexed. Some lost their lives by sinking in a swamp and some were bitten by snakes.

Now listen to the state of the passengers of the ship. Some who embarked on the ship with things collected in the island, kept sitting with their stuff on their heads. There wasn't enough space in the ship to sit, on top of that, there was even more scarcity of space for unnecessary things. The journey was long. The final end of the things they collected was that the flowers withered, fruits rotted, jewels changed their colors, brains started to implode with their stink, and it could not be conceived as to what to do about it and how to take this stuff safely with them. When nothing could be thought of, they threw everything in the ocean, but the stink had caused so much of an impact that it became difficult to arrive back at home. When they [finally] arrived home, many people became sick. Those people who boarded the ship late, although they remained a bit worried due to lack of space but still arrived home safely. Those who arrived on time at the ship and found comfortable places, remained peaceful during the journey, and arrived home safely. This is the example of worldly people who are indulged in transient pleasures and how much they have forgotten about their focus [and purpose of life] and [their heavenly] origins [which is their real and final destination]. They are neither aware of their final end nor are they cognizant of what's coming [as a consequence of their own actions]. How bad are those people who think of themselves as intelligent and wise after collecting wealth and materials goods, even though they do not understand that these are the things of worldly adornments and none of these things will be with them at the time of death, instead they will become a source of pain and sufferings. Before death, the hardships caused by them, is no less as one is constantly perturbed by the fear of losing them and the sorrow of any shortage in them, compels the heart to cry except for those people who are in God's refuge and protection. Most people are like that.

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said to his companions: "The parable of me, you and the world is that of some people who are travelling through a desert. They walked so much that they did not remember if distance they have covered is more [than the remaining distance] or the distance remaining to be covered is more. Their provision [for the journey] is all finished, and their courage has dissipated. Bereft of their provisions and mounting ride, they remained in the barren desert and they had this certitude that they were close to dying.

All of a sudden, they saw a man in good dress coming to them while drops of water dripping from his hair. They thought that this man has come from a fertile area and that place is certainly close to them. When he came close to them, he inquired about their state. They replied: 'You can see the suffering we are enduring'. The just arrived man said: 'If I take you to sweet water and lush gardens, what would you do?' They replied: 'We will obey you'. He said: 'Firm up your promises with swearing by God [that you will do as you said]'. They swore by God that they would not disobey him. As promised, he took them to the spring of sweet water and lush green gardens and stayed with them for a few days. Afterwards, he asked: 'What do you say about proceeding ahead with the journey?' They asked: 'Where are we going?' He replied: 'Towards such water that is sweeter than this water and towards gardens that are greener than these gardens'. Most people replied: 'What we have found here, perhaps, we cannot find more than that anywhere else and the life of comfort we have here, perhaps, we cannot find more than that. That's why we will not go with you'. Some people replied: 'Did you not swear by God and promised to not disobey God? Now fulfill your promise as he fulfilled his first promise, he will fulfill his other promise'. Some people left with him and the rest stayed and lagged behind. In the morning, the enemy forces ambushed - they killed some and some become prisoners'". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Ibn Abi al-Dunya, Ahmed, Bazaz* and *Tabarani* on the authority of Abdullah bin Abbas [May God be pleased with him])


انما مثلی و مثلکم و مثل الدنیا کمثل قوم سلکوا مغازة غبراء حتّٰی اذا لم
یدروا ما سلکوا منها اکثر او ما بقی انفدوا الزاد و خسروا الظهر و بقوا بین ظهرا
فی المفازة و لا زاد و لا حولة فایقنوا بالهلکة فبینما هم کذلک اذ خرج علیهم
رجل فی حلل تقطر راسه فقالوا هذا قریب عهد بریف فلما انتهی الیهم قال: یا
هؤلاء فقالوا: یا هذا فقال: علام انتم فقالوا علی ما تری فقال: ادائیتم ان
هدیتکم الی ماء رواء و ریاض خضر ما تعملون؟ قالوا لا نعصیک شیئا قال:
عهودکم و مواثیقکم باللّٰه فاعطوه عهودهم و مواثیقهم باللّٰه لا یعصونه شیئا
قال: فاوردهم ماء رواء و ریاضا خضرا فمکث فیهم ما شاء اللّٰه ثم قال: یا هولاء
قالوا: یا هذا قال الرحیل قالوا: والی این؟ قال الی ماء لیس کمائکم والی
ریاض لیست کریاضکم فقال اکثرهم واللّٰه ما وجدنا هذا حتّٰی ظننا انا لن
نجده و ما نضع بعیش خیر من هذا و قالت طائف و هم اقلهم الم تعطوا هذا
الرجل عهودکم و مواثیقکم باللّٰه ان لا تعصوه شیئا و قد صدقکم فی اول
حدیثه فو اللّٰه لیصدقنکم فی آخره فراح فیمن اتبعه و تخلف بقیتهم
فبدرهم عدو فاصبحوا بین اسیر و قتیل

This prophetic tradition mentions two groups of people. One is the follower of Divine injunctions and second one goes against it. The man coming to them is Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) himself, world is that barren

desert where people from the caravan lay down after getting tired [from a long and arduous journey], and those sweet water springs and lush gardens are the springs and gardens of the Hereafter.

A Parable of Indulgence in Worldly Pleasures and Pursuits and Pain of Separation from them: The similitude of people who have worldly wealth and possessions is that of someone who builds a house and decorates it profusely then invites people to come to the house. People come in one by one. When one sets foot in the house, host would present the guest with a gold platter laden with flowers and perfumes so that the guest would smell them and move forward, leaving behind the platter for the next person coming in. However, if the guest mistakenly thinks that the host has gifted the platter to the guest and that the guest is now the owner of that platter and develops an attachment of the heart with the platter and its perfumes. When the platter is taken away from the guest, the guest realizes that the flowers and perfumes were presented to one for enjoying only and were not presented to make one an owner of them. At this point, the guest's pain, sorrow, and desperation is worth seeing. This mistake happened because the guest was not aware of these etiquettes and traditions of the host. Contrary to that, another guest came in, who was familiar with the hosting tradition and etiquettes and took the platter, enjoyed it for a while, thanked the host and with cheerfulness and open heartedness, returned it back to the host. This is the state of those who are aware of this ancient way of God regarding the world that this world is a guest house that is dedicated to the travelers [to the eternal life] so that they can make a [brief] stopover here and collect provision from here for their next destination. In other words, just like a traveler takes advantage of a guest house (or motel), they too get benefits from the world [for their journey to their true and ultimate destination] and do not consider it (i.e., this guest house called the world) their permanent abode, and get their hearts so much attached to it that when the time for separation comes, it becomes difficult to [part from it, say farewell to it and] leave. This is the example of the world, its sufferings, and its harms. We seek help from God in this matter.

The Reality and Nature of the World for a Human Being

It should be remembered that it is not enough to gain the knowledge of the harms of worldliness until it is known as to which aspects of the world are harmful, which [aspect of the] world should be avoided, and which should not be avoided. With this respect, it is imperative to determine that because it (harmful aspects of the world) is the enemy of the seekers of truth and highway robber of the path to the truth. It should be known that world and the Hereafter are two states of your heart - the state that is near and the state that is far. First state, i.e., the state before death, is called world and second state, i.e., the state after death is called Hereafter. It is known from this that prior to death, things that are associated with human need, desire and pleasure are one's world and they are of three types:

First Type: Includes things that will stay with you in the Hereafter and their fruits will be revealed to you after death and they are only two things - knowledge and [good, pious and righteous] deeds. Knowledge here refers to knowing God's Being, attributes (qualities) and actions, and angels, Divinely revealed books, [Divinely ordained] prophets and dominions of the heaven and the earth. Deeds refer to worship done purely for the sake of God's good pleasure. Sometimes, a scholar becomes so attached to a knowledge that it becomes the most beloved and pleasurable thing. One does not give preference to another pleasure over it. One forgets eating, drinking, sleeping, all of them for the sake of knowledge. One does not marry because the pleasure one finds in knowledge cannot be found in those [other] things but when we mention the condemnable worldliness, we do not count it [as a worldly thing] but rather count it among the things of the Hereafter. Similarly, a worshipper becomes so attached to worship and finds so much pleasure in it that if one is stopped from worship, it would perhaps be the worst punishment for one. One sage used to supplicate: "O God! Grant me the power to pray, bow and prostrate to you even in my grave". He used to supplicate this because prayers became a spontaneous source of [inner spiritual] pleasure for him. This type of pleasure can also be considered worldly [along with other-worldly] as it is achieved in this worldly life, but it cannot be counted as condemnable worldliness. In one famous prophetic narration [in *Hadith* collections *Nasa'i* and *Hakim* on the authority of Anas (May God be pleased with him)], Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) counted prayers among the three things he loved from this world. It is because pleasures can be felt and observed, and prayers are also sensory and observable. The pleasure obtained through the movements of bowing and prostration [to God] is also a worldly pleasure but it is not condemnable worldliness, hence, we don't object to it.

Second Type: Includes totally opposite type of tastes and pleasures that have no benefits and consequences in the Hereafter, such as, deriving pleasures from sins, enjoying permissible things that are more than needed that are in the category of wastage and arrogance. For example, piles of gold and silver, horses (means of conveyance that are also a source of pride), livestock, servants, palaces, expensive clothes, delicious foods, etc. A servant [of God] enjoying them is from condemnable worldliness.

Third Type: Includes those pleasures that are neither purely worldly nor belonging to the Hereafter. Instead, they help with the deeds related to the Hereafter such as food according to one's needs, clothing according to one's needs, and it includes every pleasure that a human being obtains for one's survival or to achieve health needed for reaching the knowledge and deeds [needed for achieving the real purpose of life and consequent eternal happiness and endless triumph]. These pleasures are not like the first type, but they help with the first type and become means for reaching them. Therefore, if one eats to be able to carry on with knowledge and [good righteous] deeds then this act [of eating] is not from this world and one does not deserve to be termed as

worldly. However, if the driver for eating is ephemeral pleasures [in culinary delights] then this pleasure will be a worldly pleasure and will be counted in the second type.

Things that Remain with a Human Being after Death: After death, only three things remain with a servant [of God] - a heart cleansed of pollution from worldliness [and worldly entanglements and attachments that held it back from soaring into the spiritual realm], attachment with and love of Divine remembrance, and purification and limpidity of the heart. [All of] These are achieved through the abundance of the Divine remembrance and perseverance in it, and love of God is achieved through Gnosis, and Gnosis is achieved through perpetual contemplation. All these three qualities are the very means of salvation and eternal happiness for a human being after death.

The purification of the heart from worldly lusts is salvific because it is a barrier between Divine retribution and a human being. Attachment with God and Divine love are keys to eternal happiness. These two qualities grant one the pleasure of Divine vision and meeting [with the Beloved], and this great fortune is achieved right after death, and this state remains until one attains God's vision in Paradise. Grave becomes a beautiful garden of Paradise and why should it not be when the denizen of the grave had just one beloved (i.e., God)? When such a person was in the world, one could not have met the Beloved as there were some obstacles. Death removed those obstacles and one got liberated from the prison of this world - the wall standing as an obstacle between one and the Beloved, was removed. Now one would happily set foot in the Hereafter while being safe and secure from all harms and dangers. Seeker of the world faces punishment in the grave and why it should not be the case? One's beloved was just one [object] and that was the world. That beloved was snatched away from one and the wall of grave became an impediment between one and one's beloved (i.e., the world). Death is not the name of extinction [or end of human existence], instead, death causes a separation between one and one's beloved things and one is presented in the Divine court. It is known from this that the traveler on the path of the Hereafter, is the one who is perpetually absorbed in the Divine remembrance and contemplation, and scrupulously adheres to deeds that eradicate worldly lusts and desires, relinquishing them and all these things is not possible without health, which in turn is achieved through food, clothing and abode [to live]. Achieving each one of these depends on [worldly] means [such as trade or employment]. Therefore, one who obtains clothing, food, and abode according to one's needs is not deserving of being termed as worldly, instead, for such a one, world will be a farmland for the Hereafter. But if one achieved these things for the pleasure of the [lower] self (*Nafs*) or for the sake of licentiousness, one will be [a] worldly [person] and will be counted among those who are interested in worldly pleasures.

Types of Indulgences in Worldly Pleasures: There are two types of indulgences in worldly pleasures. One whose indulger becomes subject of Divine retribution and that is called indulgence in something that is Divinely forbidden (*Haram*). The second type of indulgence prevents the indulger from reaching high degrees of achievement [and

Divine acceptance], instead, they involve one into a lengthy accountability [on the Day of Judgment]. The name of this indulgence is "permissible matters" (*Halal*). People of wisdom and inner insight know that staying for a long time for lengthy accountability is also a form of Divine retribution [for indulging in pleasures during worldly life which is a place of fulfilment of needs and not of desires; the place for fulfilment of desires is the eternal life]. Even if there is no accountability but just the reduction in high ranks in the Paradise and heart's sorrow in being deprived of high [spiritual] ranks due to ephemeral, extinctive and lowly desires of the lower self, that itself is no less than a punishment.

You can deduce this condition of yours [in the Hereafter] from your condition in this world. When you see your contemporaries and equal ranked people being successful and forging ahead [of you and others] in any field [of human achievement and endeavor], then how much deprived you feel and how much the heart becomes worried for you being left behind [compared to others who are doing better than you], even though you know that these worldly ranks and blessings are temporary. They come with anxieties and hardships admixed with them. They do not have permanence and subsistence. Ponder over it, when you are so grieved and saddened for not getting worldly blessings, then what would be your state when your contemporaries will exceed you in the field of the Hereafter and you remain deprived of a great eternal happiness and everlasting success, whose magnificence is not possible to express in words? Responding to questions asked in the Hereafter involves humiliation, fear, danger, hardship and wait, and all these matters diminish the fulfillment of the Hereafter. Hence, when Umar bin Al-Khattab (May God be pleased with him) felt thirsty [and asked for water], a cold and sweetened cup of water mixed with honey was presented to him. He kept revolving the cup in his hands for quite some time [without taking even a sip from it], then returned it back to the presenter and said:

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"Keep me away from its accountability [before God on the Day of Judgment]".

Upshot of this is that the paucity, abundance, permissible and forbidden are all unneeded. Only that amount is excluded from this that assists one in pious awe, reverence, and fear of God. Staying away from worldly blessings is proportional to the strength of one's Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*). Once Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) lay down [on the ground] with the intention to sleep and put his head on a rock. Satan appeared in human form and said: "You have become inclined towards the world". Upon hearing this, he took the rock [that he was using to put his head on for resting on the ground] and threw it away [showing with his actions to Satan that he did not even need that much from the world]. Similarly, Prophet Solomon (Peace and blessings of God be upon him), even though he had the keys to the treasures of the earth and the worldly dominion, used to eat barley bread himself and fed excellent delicious meals to others. He subdued and controlled his lower self (*Nafs*) in this way, even though this was an arduous task because to exercise patience while having the ability to get [variegated sumptuous] meals is intense hardship and spiritual striving, is

not the capability of an ordinary human being. That is the reason why worldly blessings were kept away from Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) [by the Divine will], that's why, he used to be hungry for many days in a row. (This tradition has been narrated by *Hadith* collections *Tirmidhi* and *Ibn Majah* on the authority of Abdullah bin Abbas [May God be pleased with him]). At times, due to the intensity of the pangs of hunger, he used to tie rocks to his belly.

The very reason for incessant hardships and tribulations faced by prophets and friends and intimates of God (saints) is that they will have the maximum share in the Hereafter and their share in the Hereafter will not reduce due to any worldly pleasure. It is just like an affectionate father stopping his son from eating delicious food and compelling him to get medical treatment for his illness. He does not do it out of miserliness or hard-heartedness but does it out of being compelled by the love and affection for his son for the sake of his own well-being. It has now become evident from this that anything that is for the sake of God is not world and anything that is not for the sake of God is world (or worldliness).

Reality of the World and Indulgences that Cause Human Beings to Forget their own Selves, Creator of the Universe, and their own End when they are Immersed in them

It should be known that world is the name of those things that are present and are enjoyed by human beings and whose betterment one is engaged in. These are three matters. Sometimes it feels that one of these three things is termed world (worldliness). God says:

إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا مَا عَلَى ٱلْأَرْضِ زِينَةً لَّهَا لِنَبْلُوَهُمْ أَيُّهُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا

"We have made many things on earth, cause of its embellishment, in order to test the people [to see] who performs good deeds." (Qur'an, Chapter 18, Verse 7)

Earth is like a bed, an abode, and a station (a temporary resting place) and whatever is on it includes one's dress, food, and copulation. Of all the things that are on earth, they can all be divided into these three types: minerals, plants and living beings. Humans obtain food and medicines from plants, make tools and utensils from minerals like copper and steel or keep them as cash like gold and silver coins are casted from them or ornaments made from them. Living beings are of two types - human beings and animals. Animals are needed for meat, riding, and embellishment. Human beings are needed for their services [for one's needs in countless matters as human beings are inter-dependent on each other for everything], companionship as in the case of a spouse, or the objective is to simply incline their hearts towards oneself - in other words, the desire for fame. These are the things that are termed "world" (*Dunya*). God has combined all of these in one verse as follows:

زُيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ وَالْبَنِينَ وَالْقَنَاطِيرِ الْمُقَنطَرَةِ مِنَ
الذَّهَبِ وَالْفِضَّةِ وَالْخَيْلِ الْمُسَوَّمَةِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ وَالْحَرْثِ ۗ

"People find it pleasant the love of endearing things from among women, sons, hoard of gold and silver, marked horses, livestock, and tilling [of farmlands and various other professions that human beings are involved in]." (Qur'an, Chapter 3, Verse 14)

In this verse, women and sons refer to human beings, gold and silver refer to minerals and jewels, horses and livestock refer to animals and tilling refers to plants.

A Servant's Relationship with Worldly Things: A servant [of God, i.e., human being] has two areas of [relationship with] worldly things. First area is with the heart and it is that one loves them, takes advantage of them, and pre-occupies one's thoughts in their attainment to the extent that the heart becomes its prisoner, and then in this area, all those [undesirable and negative] qualities of the heart enter in, that are related to the world such as arrogance, miserliness, jealousy, show off, love of fame, bad opinion of others, acrimony, love of praise, boastfulness, and superiority complex. This area is called the inner world. The second area is called the outer world which is physical in nature. In other words, keeping the body occupied with the betterment of things that enable one to enjoy. They include all those industries and professions in which people get involved and busy with.

Due to these two very areas – heart's area of love [of various things described before] and body's area of indulgence [in various professions and industries] - people have neglected and forgotten their own selves (*Nafs*) and their purpose of life. If they recognize and know themselves, their Lord, and get to know the secret and wisdom behind the creation of the world, they will start understanding that things we have called the world (human beings, minerals, animals and plants) has been created as a fodder for the riding mount that you are riding on, and is travelling along on its way on the path to the Hereafter. This riding mount is your body and body cannot survive without food, water, clothes, and abode [to live in]. Just like a camel cannot stay alive on its journey for *Hajj* (pilgrimage to the sacred symbolic House of God placed on earth for humanity to benefit from) without grass, grain, and water. Human beings have neglected their [own] selves (*Nafs*) and purpose of life after coming into the world. It is like a pilgrim stopping at a station on the way [to the final destination], feeds the camel abundantly, takes good care of it, bathes it, decorates it, collects different types for grass for it, arranges cold water for it, and in this way the caravan moves ahead and this prisoner of camel stays behind. This pilgrim is so busy with serving the camel that neither the realization of the purpose of this journey remained nor the realization remained as to how one would carry on with the journey when the caravan has forged ahead leaving one behind and that this horror filled jungle would become one's grave. Wild beasts will neither spare one nor one's camel. An intelligent pilgrim keeps only one's purpose in

sight and the amount of service one provides to the camel would [only be in the amount needed to keep the camel going and] be part of the same purpose and a means of achieving the attainment of that purpose. One will be busy with serving the riding mount only to the extent that its strength remains and is able to get the rider to the final destination. Same is the state of the intelligent traveler traversing the path of the Hereafter. One will serve the body only to the extent that is needed. Just like one does not go to the restroom unnecessarily, similarly one does not serve the body unnecessarily. In my opinion, there is no difference between putting food in the stomach and taking it out from there. Both of them are needs of the body. Just like food is not taken out of the body unnecessarily, similarly it should not be put in unnecessarily. The thing that obviates a human being from God and the Day of Judgment is the stomach. It is because food is more important. The matter related to clothes and residence is not that difficult compared to that of the stomach. One can live without clothes under the open sky but cannot remain hungry and thirsty.

If people get to know the reason for the need of these things, they would only be contented with the needed (necessary) amount. Those people who are engrossed in worldly engagements, are doing so because they are not familiar with the reality and wisdom of the world. They have been so badly entrapped in worldly engagements that they have forgotten their own [true] objectives and have remembered only the works they are engaged in. Now an explanation will be provided about worldly engagements and why people feel the need for them and how they forget their purpose of life by engaging in them.

Three Human Needs: Worldly engagements include all those industries and occupations in which people are busy with. The reason for abundance of these engagements is that human being is in need of three things: food, clothes, and abode. Food is for staying alive, clothes to dispel heat and cold, and abode to protect against heat, cold, rain and to keep wife, children, and possessions safe. God, the Exalted, has not created anything out of these three things that has nothing to do with any industries or professions. On the other hand, this is not the same for animals. For example, they eat grass and they don't have to cook, heat and cold do not affect their bodies, that's why, they don't need clothes and abode. Their clothes are their skin and hair, and their abodes are jungles and deserts. They can live their lives under the open sky. Human being is not like that as one needs five basic industries and professions for necessities of life: farming, grazing [for livestock], hunting, weaving and construction. Construction is for making a house, weaving and its related matters for clothing, grazing for riding mounts and to get meat [from livestock], farming and cultivation for food, and hunting means obtaining what God has created in terms of hunting [like fish and animals], minerals, grass, wood, natural resources, etc.

Division of Occupations: Farmer produces crops, shepherd protects and breeds animals, a hunter (or a natural resource explorer and gatherer) obtains things that are existing naturally without one needing to do anything to create them. There are many

industries and skills that are included in that and each one of them needs its own tools. These tools are either made from plants (wood) or minerals (like iron and copper) or fur of animals. That in turn requires three industries: craftsmanship, ironwork, and leatherwork. All these occupations are related to tool making. These are the basic skills and occupations [and all others have emanated from these basic occupations].

Creation of Human Beings and Collective Existence: Human being has been created in such a way that one cannot live the life alone and is forced to have a collective existence with other persons of one's kind. There are two reasons for that. One reason is that for the sake of the survival of the human race, one is in need of advancing the human race which cannot happen without the union of a man and a woman in a marital life. Second reason is that one is not capable of doing all the works by oneself. Eating, drinking, dressing, upbringing of children, and other matters like that, make one realize the need for cooperation with others. Children are born out of the relationship between a man and a woman and a single person cannot fulfil all responsibilities alone from their upbringing to the provision of their food and clothing. Furthermore, it is not sufficient to have a collective existence with [only] spouse and children, rather to live one's life, it is important to have a lot of people so that every person adopts a different occupation. One person cannot do all works related to farming because farming requires tools which cannot be built without an ironworker and a craftsman. In order to prepare food from crop, there is a need for someone to grind the grains and a baker for baking bread. Similarly, no one can alone make clothing, because first of all, one will need to grow cotton then build tools for weaving and sewing. Tools are too numerous, and one person alone cannot prepare all these tools oneself. Likewise, it is not possible for a human being to live alone, instead, collective existence is imperative. If this collectivity is in a desert or on a bare land under open sky then they will suffer from heat, cold and rain. They will be vexed at the hands of thieves and robbers. That's why, it became necessary to build houses and that every family has its own house where they spend their lives safely with their possessions, protect themselves from heat, cold and rain, and safeguard their means of livelihood. Since thieves and robbers can break into solid built home and vex their residents, plunder their possessions, and means [of livelihood], the need arose to build tall boundary walls around houses. This need formed the basis of cities and settlements. Then when people got together in homes and cities and had mutual dealings, it caused their mutual disputes. Similarly, mutual differences were also born [out of this collective living]. Husband has responsibility for his wife and father has responsibility for his offspring, since offspring are weak and are in need of support of their parents to live their lives. Responsibility and guardianship results in conflicts and disputes, as opposed to that, guardianship on animals does not result in disputes because they do not even have the strength to dispute and resist even though oppression is committed against them. On the other hand, a woman would dispute with and rise up against her husband if she is wronged. Children end up disputing with their parents. This is the state of home (or within a family). People in a city have mutual dealings and as a result of that, face differences and conflicts. If they are left alone, they will kill each other by

fighting among themselves. Same is the situation with shepherds and farmers. If they benefit from shared [natural] resources like pastures, farmlands, streams and wells and their objectives are not fulfilled from them, mutual differences will rise among them for sure. There are some people who, because of weakness, illness, old age, or other reasons, are incapable of farming or working in an industry. If these people are left helpless, they will get wasted (or destroyed). If the responsibility of looking after them is placed on everyone [else], it will not resolve the matter or if put on any single person exclusively then why would one bear that responsibility [alone]. Because of these [compelling] reasons and impediments, many other industries were born. One of them is the skill of measurements and through it, the amount of land can be measured. The profession of law enforcement was born because at the time of disputes, things can be assessed correctly so that every rightful owner can get one's rights. Those who are well versed in this profession, guard the cities with their weapons and protect the city dwellers from thieves and their enemies. One skill is administration and governance and with its help, the city dwellers' mutual disputes are resolved. One such skill is the Divine law (*Fiqh*), in other words, becoming familiar with those Divine injunctions and laws that are used to instill discipline in the lives of the creations and to familiarize people with the limits of God so that they remain within the bounds of the Divine law in all matters and not indulge in disputes. These skills are related to city administration and their necessity cannot be denied. Only those specific people can be busy in these skills who possess the qualities of knowledge, discernment, guidance, and other qualities like that.

It's evident that if these people are involved in these skills and occupations, they will not be able to do anything else. They need to earn a living and city inhabitants need them [for administration]. If let's say, all people in the city get engaged in a war, all industries will be put on hold. Likewise, if all soldiers get engaged in industries and occupations to earn a living, the cities (and countries) will become unsafe [due to not having any defense against invading armies] and the lives of the inhabitants will get endangered at all times. That's why, the need arose for spending money for the income and sustenance of such people, from sources that are not owned by any specific person (public funds that are used for public good). Inhabitants of a city will need to help them with their resources so they can [in turn] help protect the city. That brought up the need for taxes. Many other needs arose from matters related to taxes. For example, there was a need to have someone who would appoint taxes with fairness on cultivators and wealthy individuals. Along with that, there was a need for a tax collector and a treasurer to safekeep the collected taxes. A tax distributor was also inevitable. All these needs resulted in delegation of responsibilities to qualified individuals. There was a need to have a leader who acts with justice in collecting taxes, distributing them [for public good], using soldiers in case of a war, giving them weapons to defend, appointing a leader of the army, appointing innumerable people for managing the affairs of the state. All these people (appointees of public offices) are in need of salaries as they cannot adopt other occupations while fulfilling their public responsibilities. All these endeavors

[related to administration] require resources which can be acquired through means like taxes.

Ponder over this! The need for food, clothes, and a place to live engendered so many other needs. Such is the state of all other worldly matters. If one door is opened [for a human need and endeavor], it causes many other doors to open automatically and this chain of events does not come to an end as if world is like a pit whose depth has no limit. When a human being falls in one ditch in this world and is not able to get out of it, falls into a second one and from there into a third. These are some examples of creations' engagements, [variegated] efforts, and economic struggles. People are busy with these activities day and night. Every person is obsessed with earning money and have made it the purpose of one's life. One is so engrossed in one's activities [and various worldly engagements] that one has neither any sense left of one's existence nor the realization of one's [real] purpose of life or the consideration of the life after death. All people are unceasingly struggling for the world and are going around bewildered [in that struggle so that they have forgotten their own souls]. The muddiness from worldly engagements has become so dominant on their weak intellects and imperfect minds that even their thoughts have not been spared of the turmoil and corruption!

Types of People Engrossed in Worldliness: People engrossed in the world neither have the same thoughts nor do they have a common purpose. Some people have one perspective some have another. One such group of people have their eyes covered with thick veils of heedlessness and ignorance to the extent that their eyes (insights) do not have any capability left to cast a glance at their final end. They say that we only have a few days of life (a short time span) to live in the world, that's why, we need to work hard so we can earn our sustenance, eat and gain strength from eating so that we are again able to earn sustenance. In other words, they eat to earn. This is the perspective of cultivators, professionals, and those who neither have [a lot of] worldly comforts available nor do they have a status (a lot of practice) in religion. They work very hard during the day so they can eat to their fill at night and they eat at night so they can work hard during the day. This is such a journey and a circle that will only end in death.

Some people claim to know the purpose of their creation. They say that the purpose of Divine law is not to make humans perform [righteous] deeds and that they do not enjoy any pleasures from the worldly pleasures, instead, the culmination of human achievement (*Sa'ada*) is for humans to fulfil the lusts of stomach and private parts. These people have also neglected their own selves (*Nafs*) and are so engrossed in carnal pleasures and delicious foods that nothing [else] has been remembered. They started to live their lives like animals and on top of that they claim that lusts (enjoyments and carnal pleasures) are the real purpose [of life]. Such are the people who are heedless of Divine remembrance and the thought of the Hereafter.

Some people have believed that real culmination of human achievement (*Sa'ada*) is the abundance of wealth and treasures. Therefore, they have ruined their night's sleep and

peace during the day in gathering material possessions [and wealth] by undertaking long journeys and tolerated every hardship of the way, did every kind of thing for wealth no matter the amount of hardship and humiliation. They remain engaged in just earning and accumulating to the extent they did not even like to eat more than the [bare minimum] needed amount, as their stinginess did not allow them to spend anything and cause a reduction in their capital. This is as if accumulation of wealth became the source of pleasure for them and to the last breath of their lives they were engrossed in that pleasure until the death came and all that treasure remained buried in earth [or wherever they clandestinely stored it] or got into the hands of other people who spent all of them in the way of lust and pleasure. They themselves did not achieve anything [out of their untiring efforts] other than hardships, consequences in the Hereafter were on top of that, pleasure was only achieved by other people who benefited from their efforts. It is surprising that people see how misers [and hoarders] end up but [still] do not care.

Some people thought that real culmination of human achievement (*Sa'ada*) is that they should get praised [and achieve a lot of fame] and that every person should admire their nice dresses, their immaculate, elegant, and embellished outer appearances. Such people are also busy day and night with earning money, but they constrain themselves in eating and drinking (food) and spend all their money on procuring good clothes and good conveyance. They shine the doors of the house and exterior walls with [beautiful] paints to dazzle the eyes so that people looking at them will start to think that the owner of the house is so wealthy. This praise is their very pleasure and intoxication, and for this very pleasure they earn day and night without considering where their hard-earned money is being spent.

Some people thought that real culmination of human achievement (*Sa'ada*) is in attaining fame and rank that everyone respects and gives obeisance to with humility and deference and becomes obedient to. In order to gain people's following, there was a need for rank (high social status and power) and prestige (fame). That's why, they started to strive to gain a role in the government to be in a position to make decisions that get implemented. Ruling over a few people and getting their obedience is their purpose. This thing is present in most of the heedless that they consider people's following as everything and their obedience (or following in any matter) have made them oblivious to God's obedience, worship and imagining the Hereafter.

These are some types of people [who are engrossed in worldliness]. Other than them, there are some other sects (groups of people) whose number is more than seventy. All these groups are intrinsically misguided, and they misguide others from the path of truth. The real reason for their inclination towards this misguidance is that in worldly life, they want good food, good clothes, and good house. There is no denying the need for food, clothes, and home but it should also be seen, how much amount from each of the three [things] is sufficient [for one's genuine needs]. The need and desire for more than the needed amount has pushed and propelled them so much that world has become their sole purpose of life and they ran towards this purpose in such a way that they

forgot their own final end. Those people who understand the need for means of life - food, clothes and abode and are familiar with their real purpose, do not get engrossed in any work [in such a way] that they neglect the purpose of their creation. Whatever work they do, they have the knowledge of its purpose and their share in that. It is evident that the purpose of economic struggle is to protect the body by means of food and clothing so that the body does not die, and for the purpose of "worship" for which it has been created is achieved. People who get a lesser amount of their share in the world, [are able to] become oblivious to worldly engagements to direct their attention to the Hereafter. On their hearts, the contemplation of Divine remembrance and their own demise [in the form of their inevitable death] dominates and at every moment, they are ready for the forthcoming life. Those people who exceed the bounds of need (necessity), their worldly actions and endeavors do not let them live in peace. One [worldly] engagement engenders the second and this chain [of engagements] becomes never-ending. The excessiveness of [worldly] engagements, increases worries and imprisons the heart and mind in anxieties. Such a person whose heart is always indulged in the world and whose mind is overshadowed by it, how can such person even remember God? Such is the state of those who are engrossed in the world.

Those who perceive this reality, avoid worldliness but Satan is jealous of them and misguides them even in their avoidance. Hence, many groups have been formed of people who avoid worldliness. One group thought that world is the place for hard work and [enduring] hardships and Hereafter is the abode of eternal happiness and endless success (*Sa'ada*). So, whoever reached the Hereafter [successfully], embraced eternal happiness and endless success whether one has performed Divine worship (*Ibadah*) or not in this world. On that account, they perceived that the right path [of guidance] is that to get rid of worldly sufferings, human beings should destroy their selves. Hence, a group of people fall into fire to embrace death and think that by doing so they get rid of worldly sufferings and sorrows. One group of people think that there is no use of taking one's own live, instead it is necessary to eradicate human qualities (nature). The culmination of human achievement (*Sa'ada*) of the Hereafter is in completely separating anger and lust from the self (*Nafs*). This group carried out intense spiritual struggle to eradicate their human nature. Some people were so harsh on themselves that they died during their spiritual struggle and some lost their minds and senses and fell sick and were no longer able to carry on with their spiritual struggle. Some people, when they saw that they were unable to eradicate their human nature despite spiritual struggle, started to think that it is impossible to act upon the Divine law (injunctions regarding moral, ethical and spiritual teachings) and that the Divine law is a mere deception and has no basis. Consequently, they embarked on the path of irreligiosity and rejection of God. One group thought that all worships are performed for the sake of God who is in no need of them, as neither the disobedience of a sinner reduces His Divine Magnificence nor the worship of a righteous increases His Greatness and Sanctity. [As a consequence of harboring this mistaken belief] They returned to their lusts and started treading the path of declaring everything as legitimate [irrespective of good or bad, moral or immoral, ethical or unethical, righteous or evil]. They turned the

Divine law and its injunctions upside down and got involved in this corrupted conjecture that considering everything as legitimate [and a fair game] is a proof of the clarity and limpidity of their belief in Divine Oneness (*Tawheed*) because it is their belief that God is in no need of worship from His servants (human beings). One group believed that the objective of Divine worship is spiritual striving so that the servant [of God] can reach the Divine Gnosis by means of striving in worship. Attaining Gnosis signifies that the purpose has been achieved and there is no more a need of any further spiritual striving. In this way, these people left spiritual struggle and worship and started to claim that God's Gnosis has liberated them from the bounds of strivings - only laymen are obligated to adhere to the injunctions of the Divine law. There are innumerable misguided groups of people like that and their wrong beliefs are so many that it is difficult to get them in writing. Among these groups, the only group that will attain salvation is the one that follows the method of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) and his noble companions (May God be pleased with them all), in other words, they will neither leave the world entirely nor will eradicate the lusts (word used here is in the sense of "human nature") entirely - they will take from the world [only] a needed portion that will become a reliance or provision (bare necessities that one takes in a journey) in the path of the Hereafter, and will leave those lusts that are excluded from the bounds of adherence to the Divine law.

A believer with correct beliefs should neither follow every lust nor leave every lust, instead, should adopt a path of moderation. In other words, one should neither leave everything of the world nor achieve everything of the world, instead one should understand the purpose of everything created by God and safeguard that purpose. For example, one should take the amount of food that is needed to gain strength for Divine worship (the gamut of worship is not restricted to prayers and Divine remembrance, rather every act no matter how mundane, including earning a living and recreation, done for the sake of God and for advancement in the path leading to Him, is an act of Divine worship), achieve that much house that can protect one from thieves and harshness of hot and cold weather, that much clothing that can cover the body and protect one in changing weather so that when heart gets freed up from bodily responsibilities, is able to focus on God and engage in Divine remembrance and contemplation, while keeping a strict watch on one's lusts (passions and materialistic ambitions) so that they do not exceed the bounds of righteousness and God-fear. All these matters come to one's knowledge by following the salvific group that follows the way of the noble companions (May God be pleased with them all) as according to Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) are on his path and those who are on the path of his companions. These people were treading the path of moderation and were followers of that clear and illumined path that have been outlined in detail in the aforementioned. They used to attain world not for the sake of the world, but for the sake of the path to God (*Deen*), they used to neither adopt a hermit lifestyle nor did they become oblivious to the necessities of the world. In their matters, there was neither an excess nor paucity, instead it was a path [of moderation avoiding all extremes] in the middle in between paucity and excess as moderation is beloved to God.

Chapter 7 - Harms of Stinginess and Love of Material Possessions

Ghazali's seventh book in the third volume or quarter of his *magnum opus* "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God" deals with two other impediments of the spiritual path – both of them driven by greed, miserliness, and love and attachment of material possessions. A materialistic outlook on life hampers generosity for the common good of the broader community that one is a part of, and fosters greed that leads to usurpation of legitimate rights of others. Promotion of selfishness, driven by greed and materialism, makes individuals, societies, and communities immune to the sufferings of those who are at the lower end of the social order and in turn causes conflicts, discord and schism between haves and have-nots. Ghazali diagnoses these two ailments, analyzes their negative repercussions for the spiritual path and prescribes their cure that liberates one to freely pursue inner spiritual excellence. Contents of this book by Ghazali are presented here in condensed form as follows [13]:

Trials and Tribulations of the Worldly Life: It should be known that the trials and tribulations of the world are quite expansive with branch after branch and are innumerable. The biggest of these is material possessions and no individual can be oblivious to it and if it is achieved, safeguarding against its harms is very difficult. Being deprived of it is poverty that can sometimes lead one to disbelief (*Kufr*) and being wealthy is a cause of rebellion [against Divine injunctions] that results in nothing but loss. Upshot is that wealth has both benefits and harms. Its benefits are among the salvific qualities and its harms are among the destructive inner qualities. Wealth has two aspects - the good and evil. It is so difficult to differentiate between the two that only those scholars can do it who are firmly ingrained in knowledge and have deep insights into the path to God (*Deen*), as opposed to those who are customary scholars and deception-stricken religious elite. That's why, it is imperative to mention the harms of wealth and material possessions separately because what has been explained in the last chapter was related to worldliness and not specifically to wealth. Every fleeting and ephemeral pleasure is called "world". In this respect, wealth is also a component of the world, wealth alone is not termed as "world". One component of the world is fame and prestige, one component is the lusts of the stomach and of the private parts, one component is to get subdued by anger, one component is jealousy, one is arrogance and grandeur. There are many components and parts like that that human beings derive pleasure from.

Trials of Wealth: In this book, only material possessions [and wealth] will be made the topic of discussion because it has more trials and harms for human beings. If one lacks material possessions, it creates the quality of poverty (also refers to neediness of God in the spiritual sense) in an individual and if it exists, it creates the quality of wealthiness in one. Both of these states are states of trials and tests. Then two qualities are in turn

born in the person devoid of material possessions - contentment and greed. One of them (greed) is reprehensible and the other one (contentment) is desirable. Greedy person also has two further qualities - one is to keep an eye on another person's possessions desiring to usurp them; second is the desire to obtain material possessions that prompts one to get busied with trade, employment, or industry. Greed is one of the worst qualities. Wealthy person also has two qualities - miserliness and withholding from others [even if it is something legitimate that must be given to others, owing to one's stingy nature], and spending. One of these qualities is desirable and other one is reprehensible. The spender also has two qualities - wasteful spending and moderation. Among them, moderation is praiseworthy. All these things are vague and subtle, that's why, it's important to explain them. These matters will be explained in the following. First, the harms of wealth will be explained followed by its benefits. Then details regarding its benefits and harms will be presented. This will be followed by condemnation of greed then its cure will be explained. Generosity will be explained with traditions of generous people, after that stinginess will be condemned and traditions about misers will be presented. After that, excellence, and superiority of preferring others over oneself will be explained. Limits of the Divine law about miserliness and generosity will be dealt with. Cure of miserliness will be outlined then there will be an explanation of collective responsibilities about wealth.

Harms of Wealth and Disapproval of Having Love for it

God says:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ لَا تُلۡهِكُمۡ أَمۡوَٰلُكُمۡ وَلَآ أَوۡلَٰدُكُمۡ عَن ذِكۡرِ ٱللَّهِۚ وَمَن يَفۡعَلۡ ذَٰلِكَ فَأُوْلَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلۡخَٰسِرُونَ

"O you who believe! Do not let your material possessions (wealth) and progeny make you heedless of God's remembrance. One who does that, will be among the losers." (Qur'an, Chapter 63, Verse 9)

إِنَّمَآ أَمۡوَٰلُكُمۡ وَأَوۡلَٰدُكُمۡ فِتۡنَةٞۚ وَٱللَّهُ عِندَهُۥٓ أَجۡرٌ عَظِيمٞ

"Your material possessions (wealth) and your progeny are a [cause of] trial and test for you and with God is a tremendous recompense [for putting your priorities right and maintaining your focus on and striving for the true purpose of your life while fulfilling your worldly responsibilities in the best possible manner]." (Qur'an, Chapter 64, Verse 15)

مَن كَانَ يُرِيدُ ٱلْحَيَوٰةَ ٱلدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتَهَا نُوَفِّ إِلَيْهِمْ أَعْمَٰلَهُمْ فِيهَا وَهُمْ فِيهَا لَا يُبْخَسُونَ

"One who desires merely the life of this world and its pomp and glitter [as a recompense for good deeds] then We grant such people the recompense of their [good] deeds in this world and there is no scarcity [or reduction in material benefits] for them in the world." (Qur'an, Chapter 11, Verse 15)

كَلَّآ إِنَّ ٱلْإِنسَٰنَ لَيَطْغَىٰٓ ﴿٦﴾ أَن رَّءَاهُ ٱسْتَغْنَىٰٓ ﴿٧﴾

"Human being exceeds all bounds [of decency, morality and good behavior] because of seeing oneself as self-sufficient and wealthy." (Qur'an, Chapter 96, Verses 6-7)

أَلْهَىٰكُمُ ٱلتَّكَاثُرُ

"Abundance of wealth has made you heedless [of the real purpose of your life and the right actions you need to work towards it]." (Qur'an, Chapter 102, Verse 1)

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

ماذئبان ضاريان ارسلا فی زريبة غنم باكثرا فسادا فيها من حب الشرف والمال والجاه فی دين الرجل المسلم

"If two ferocious [and hungry] wolves break into a flock of goats, they do not cause as much turmoil (damage) which is caused in the faith of a Muslim due to love for wealth and prestige (fame and power)". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Tirmidhi* and *Nasa'i* on the authority of Ka'b ibn Malik [May God be pleased with him])

يقول ابن ادم مالی مالی وهل لک من مالک الا ما اكلت فافنيت او لبست فابليت او تصدقت فامضيت

"Son of Adam (human beings) says: 'My wealth, my wealth!' Is there anything from your wealth that is really yours other than what you ate from it and finished (used) it or wore from it and made it old [by using it]?" (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Abu Hurairah and Abdullah bin Al-Shakheir [May God be pleased with them])

اخلاء بنی آدم ثلاثة واحد يتبعه الی قبض روحه والثانی الی قبره والثالث الی محشره فالذی يتبعه الی قبض روحه فهو ماله فالذی يتبعه الی قبره فهو اهله والذی يتبعه الی محشره فهو عمله

"Children of Adam (human beings) have three friends. First stays with them until the soul is seized (death). Second stays with one until grave (burial). Third stays with one

until the Day of Judgment. One that helps until soul is seized is wealth. One that helps until grave are friends, family, and relatives. One that helps until the Day of Judgment is one's [good, righteous, pious and noble] deeds". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Tabarani Awsat, Tabarani Kabeir* and *Ahmed* on the authority of Nauman bin Basheer [May God be pleased with him])

Disciples of Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said to him: "You walk on water, but we are not able to. What is the reason for that?" He replied: "What is the importance of *Dirham* and *Dinar* (gold and silver coins used for currencies in old times)?" They said: "We do not consider them as good". He replied: "Both of these are equivalent to small pebbles to me [and that's why, I am able to walk on water due to detachment from materialism]".

A [Arab] poet said this [in poetry]:

لا یغرنک من المرء قمیص رقعه او ازار فوق عظیم الساق منه رفعه
او جبین لاح فیه اثر قد خلعه اره الدرهم تعرف حبه او ورعه

"You should not get deceived by someone's clothes with patches [that is a sign of poverty], pants lifted above the ankles (sign of adherence to Divine injunctions) and mark of prostration [before God] on one's forehead (sign of devout worship to God). Show one the *Dirham* (gold coins or money) then you will know either one's love for the wealth or one's abstinence from it [because abstinence from materialism is the true indication of one's religiosity and spirituality and not the outward semblances of religiosity and piety]".

Conflict Resolution between Praise and Criticism of Wealth

Divine law sometimes condemns it and calls it a tactic of Satan and fountainhead of all sins and evils, and sometimes praises it and calls it a means of attaining various [acts of Divine] worships. How can there be a conflict resolution between these [seemingly] conflicting verses and traditions? The method for doing that (resolution of the apparent conflict) is hard to understand until the wisdom, purpose and harms of wealth are understood. Only after that, this reality is revealed that wealth is good for one reason and bad for a different reason. It is praiseworthy for being good and condemnable for being bad. It is because the wealth is neither pure evil nor pure good, rather it is the means for both good and evil and is the means for attaining both. In the chapter on Divine gratitude (in the fourth volume of Ghazali's "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God" and Chapter 12 in this work) we have explained the degrees of good and blessings. The only intention of mentioning it here is that the purpose of wise and possessors of mystic insight is the eternal happiness and endless success (*Sa'ada*) of

the Hereafter which is a durable and enduring [Divine] blessing. The spiritual and intelligent folks are the only ones who intend to achieve this blessing.

Means of Obtaining Eternal Happiness and Endless Triumph:

In this world, the eternal happiness and endless success (*Sa'ada*) of the Hereafter cannot be obtained without three sources: Firstly, the excellences of the self (Nafs) such as knowledge and good demeanor, disposition, temperament, and character (*Ikhlaq*). Secondly, bodily excellences such as health and personal well-being. Thirdly, excellences that are extraneous [to one's self and body] such as wealth and worldly resources. Among these, the best of all means [for attaining eternal happiness and everlasting success or *Sa'ada*] is the excellences of the self, followed by bodily excellences and in the end are the excellences that are extraneous to both the body and the self and they include wealth and money that have the least status, as they are servants of human beings and nothing serves them. They are desired in order to obtain other things [through them] and they are not desired for themselves. This is because the self (*Nafs*) is such a subtle existence whose eternal happiness and endless triumph is desired, and it serves knowledge, Divine Gnosis, and high character traits so that these qualities become intrinsic inner qualities of the self. After that, self is served by the body, senses, and limbs. Food and clothing serve the body. It has been stated previously that eating is for preserving the body and marriage is for preserving the human race. The purpose of body is to cause the perfection and completion of the self; purification of the soul, knowledge and good character are for the purpose of perfuming the garden of the self. A person who is aware of this sequence or ordering would be well aware of the true status of wealth [that it is the least of all excellences and is there to serve the higher purpose and objectives of human existence] and would be aware of what makes it good. Material possessions are important for the self, but self is the real kernel of existence. One who understands the benefit of an object and uses it after getting to know its true purpose and keep its true purpose in view, then that usage will be better and beneficial to one. Just like wealth can be a means for a correct purpose, it can also be a means for wrong purposes and objectives that clash with the eternal happiness and endless success of the Hereafter and block the paths of knowledge and [righteous] actions. Similarly, wealth (material possessions) can both be praiseworthy and condemnable - praiseworthy when it is ascribed to praiseworthy objectives and condemnable when it is ascribed to condemnable objectives. This is stated in a Prophetic narration (*Hadith*) that one who takes more material possessions than one's true needs, in reality, imperceptibly asks for one's [own] destruction. This is because the human temperaments are inclined towards lusts and find pleasure in following them, and these lusts stop one from [treading] the path of truth, and wealth is a big means of obtaining these lusts. That's why, taking more wealth than [truly] needed, is not bereft of danger. Hence, prophets have sought God's refuge from the evils of wealth and material possessions [as they lure one into wrong and evil ways if used for wrong

purposes]. Following supplication [to God] is attributed to Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him):

اللّٰھم احینی مسکینا وامتنی مسکینا واحشرنی فی زمرۃ المساکین

"O God! Keep me alive as a poor person, grant me death in the state of poverty, and raise me up [on the Day of Judgment] in the group of the poor". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Tirmidhi* on the authority of Anas bin Malik [May God be pleased with him])

Harms and Benefits of Wealth

Wealth has, like a snake, both the venom and the antidote. Antidote is from its benefits and venom is from its harms. Only an individual who is familiar with both its harms and benefits will be able to save oneself from its venom and get benefits from its antidote. Benefits of wealth are both religious as well as worldly. There is no need to mention the worldly benefits as they are well-known and famous. If that had not been the case, why would people put themselves in harm and destruction for the sake of wealth? However, the religious (spiritual) benefits are worth mentioning.

Religious Benefits of Wealth: They are of three kinds. Firstly, it is to spend money on oneself, whether it is for [Divine] worship or for obtaining help with the worship such as pilgrimage (*Hajj*) as it cannot be accomplished without wealth (financial means). It is among the principles of worship and a poor person is not able to obtain this excellence [of performing the pilgrimage]. Obtaining help with worship is done by spending on food, clothes, residence and marriage because these are basic necessities [of life] and until they are fulfilled, heart remains engrossed in them and is not freed up for matters related to the path to God (*Deen*), and it is a principle that things needed to achieve the strength for worship are also included in worship. That's why, obtaining worldly resources according to one's [genuine] needs to gain help for one's religion [so that one's worldly needs and responsibilities are fulfilled, and heart gets freed up for spiritual strivings], is also among the religious benefits of the world. However, it does not include conspicuous consumption, opulence, material enjoyments and amounts that are beyond one's genuine needs as they are counted among worldly (carnal) pleasures. Secondly, wealth that is spent on others are of four types: charity, hospitality, protecting one's honor, and payment for services obtained. As far as charity is concerned, its Divine recompense is not hidden from anyone. It is such a good righteous deed that extinguishes God's displeasure [with a servant for one's own misdeeds and contraventions of Divine injunctions]. In the previous chapters, excellences of charity have been enumerated. By hospitality we are referring to spending money on inviting wealthy and righteous for feast and giving them presents and this is not termed as charity because charity is given to the needy. Spending by way of hospitality is also not

bereft of religious benefits because it is a means of making friends and brothers. By adorning oneself with the quality of generosity, one gets included among the generous [as generosity and altruism are tremendous spiritual virtues]. One is not deserving of being called generous until one treats people with excellence and hospitality. This act is also a means of great Divine recompense.

Spending to safeguard one's honor is also not devoid of religious benefit. For example, to give something to a poet who says bad things about one in poetry or makes fun of one in gatherings. Similarly, it is spending to shut the mouths of people who are bereft of any self-respect and dignity and to protect oneself from their evil. Spending to protect one's honor and dignity is also worthy of Divine recompense in the sense that the backbiter is saved from the sin of backbiting and no turmoil (*Fitna*) is spread through one's speech [and writing for that matter], Muslims are not entrapped in [the trap of harboring] enmity, and the person who is backbitten against, does not respond back in kind being compelled by feelings of revenge in a way that is against the bounds of the Divine law. Paying compensation for getting services from others is also not bereft of Divine recompense because human beings are dependent on others for innumerable things for their necessities. If one starts to do them oneself, it will waste a lot of time and it will become difficult to tread the path of the Hereafter and there will be no time left for Divine remembrance, although, the high station for spiritual travelers is this very Divine remembrance and contemplation. It is apparent that one who does not have wealth (financial means) will be doing all of one's works oneself. For example, buying crops (grains), grinding them, cooking them, cleaning the house, even going to the extent of preparing copies of the books that one needs, oneself. All the works that can be accomplished through others, one will need to do them oneself. This is a tremendous disadvantage. A wealthy person is protected from that. Even if a wealthy person who starts to do everything oneself, will remain deprived of [righteous] deeds, knowledge, Divine remembrance, and contemplation.

Thirdly, [the religious or spiritual benefits of spending wealth includes] spending wealth not on specific individual(s) but on common public benefit or service. For example, building mosques (places of worshipping God), bridges, lodges for travelers, medical clinics, schools, and places of spiritual learnings (*Madaris*), dedicating land and properties for establishing public trusts (*Waqf*). These are the expenditures that benefit one even after death. Pious and righteous servants of God pray for such people for a long time and what would be a righteous deed better than this. Other than religious benefits of wealth, there are many [obvious] worldly benefits of them. For example, one who has it, is saved from the humiliation of poverty and blemish of neediness. People respect one and give one importance. If a wealthy person spends [on hospitality], it increases one's circle of friends, people feel proud to establish brotherly relations with one, and help one in times of need. Wealthy who are pious and righteous, are respected by people from the [depth of the] heart.

Harms of Wealth: There are also two types of harms of wealth - religious and worldly. Religious harms are of three types. One is that wealth and material possessions put human beings on the path of sin because lusts unceasingly attack the heart. By means of dispossession [of wealth] and humility [resulting from the state of poverty and neediness], one can be safeguarded against lusts because when one is despair of (unable to) committing a sin, the incentive (provocation) for that (sin or anything evil or harmful to others) is not even born in the heart. When there is realization that one can now commit a sin, provocation to do so arises in the heart. Presence of wealth is an enabler that creates in one the ability [to commit sins, transgressions of human norms, oppressions, etc.]. One will get destroyed by acting on this desire and one will endure hardships if one exercises patience and restraint [from doing that] because patience is very difficult in the presence of ability [to do evil]. The harm (*Fitna*) of wealth is greater than the harm (*Fitna*) of poverty. Second harm [to the religion or spirituality posed by wealth] is that the presence of wealth can lead to opulence, extravagance, and wastefulness in permissible matters and this is the first level of misuse of wealth. This is because a wealthy person cannot eat barley bread, wear coarse clothes and abandon all delicious food as was done by Prophet Solomon (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) despite the vastness of his kingdom, dominion and control of the treasuries of the earth. But not everyone can do that and one who has expansiveness [and ease in life] due to wealth, will surely adopt opulence, extravagance and wastefulness, i.e., one will eat good, wear good clothes and make one's self (*Nafs*) habituated to that. When one finds pleasure in opulence, extravagance, and wastefulness, it will be impossible to dissuade from that. Instead, this habituation will increase to such an extent that if one's opulence, extravagance and wastefulness is not fulfilled through legal (*Halal*) means, one will get compelled to employ prohibited (illegal or *Haram*) means [to obtain wealth to sustain one's opulent and extravagant lifestyle]. One will allow stubbornness, lies, hypocrisy and other bad morals and habits to make room in the heart, so that the organization (setup and running) of one's own world would remain according to one's wishes and there is no reduction in one's opulence, extravagance and wastefulness. One who has more wealth, is more in need of people and uses hypocritical ways to get things done, and does not even desist from God's disobedience in order to gain their approval. The need for and dependency on creations engenders, both friendship and animosity that in turn allows jealousy, rancor, ostentation, arrogance, lying, talebearing, backbiting and all such sins to flourish that are specific to heart and tongue. There also remains the possibility that these sins will transcend the heart and tongue to transfer to other [bodily] organs. These are all ill forebodings of wealth and material possessions.

Third harm and no wealthy individual is devoid of it, is that after being indulged in accruing and safeguarding wealth, one becomes negligent of Divine remembrance and anything that causes that is such a loss that cannot be compensated for. Heedlessness of Divine remembrance is an incurable and fatal illness because the crux and objective of all worships is the Divine remembrance and contemplation in His Being and Attributes, that in turn requires a freed-up heart. If one has [agricultural] land, one is busy day and night in issues related to farming - sometimes doing accounting,

sometimes arguing with co-sharers, sometimes there are disagreements about water [supply for the farmland] and boundaries, sometimes quarrelling with officials appointed for tax collection.

Sometimes one is dealing with issues related to builders and laborers. A businessman is bothered by the sorrow that one's business partner is entitled to half of the profits but does not equally participate in doing the work. Sometimes one is seen fabricating the accusation that one's partner is involved in theft and dishonesty. Same is the state of owners of livestock. Rather, for all types of possessions and wealth, the owners are approximately in the same state that instead of God's remembrance, they are involved in their possessions and are worried and perturbed for their increase and safety. Hence, the focus is not there in Divine remembrance and contemplation, instead, every moment, one is beset with worries about safeguarding them (the assets). Worldly worries and engagements are innumerable and they have no limits. One who has one day's worth of food, is protected from all of these cares and is safe from all these engagements. These are the religious harms of the wealth. It can be added to this that the wealthy do everything for the sake of acquiring wealth. Once wealth is achieved, they are perturbed to the core of their being to safeguard them. Protecting themselves from the jealousy of the jealous is on top of that. All the time, one is apprehensive that the wealth achieved by so much hard work and hardships, may get wasted. It is evident from this that wealth is a poison. It is an antidote only when it is considered as a means of subsistence and any excess wealth is spent as charity (selfless giving) in the way of God [to attain Divine pleasure and nearness].

Cure of Greed and Medicine for Fostering Contentment

This medicine is composed of three ingredients: patience, knowledge, and actions [according to the correct knowledge]. Together they give rise to five matters: Firstly, actions; to be precise, [actions constitute] moderation in economic matters and reduction in [unnecessary] expenditures. One who desires the honor of contentment should try to close the doors on one's self (*Nafs*) for expenditures, and spend only on one's [genuine] needs. It is because, one whose circle of expenditures keeps increasing, is not able to have contentment. If an individual is alone (living by oneself), one should be contented with coarse clothes and little food. If possible, one should eliminate curry from one's diet and get accustomed to eating food without it [with just the bread]. If one has family, one should persuade all members of household to have ordinary clothes and food and should try to color them in one's own color because a small amount of everything can be obtained with little effort, as one's wants have been reduced in this manner and [consequently,] life will be spent with moderation. This is the reality of contentment. Having mildness in expenses, refers to the same thing. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

ان اللّٰہ یحب الرفق فی الامر کلۃ

"Certainly, God loves gentleness and mercy [to be exercised by all human beings] in all (each and every) matters". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Aisha [May God be pleased with her])

ما عال من اقتصد

"A moderate person (one who practices moderation in every matter of life and avoids going to all forms of extremes and extremisms) never becomes poor (i.e., such an individual prospers and is never disappointed)". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Ahmed* and *Tabarani* on the authority of Abdullah bin Mas'ud [May God be pleased with him])

ثلاث منجیات خشی اللّٰہ فی السر والعلانیۃ والقصد فی الغنی والفقر والعدل فی الرضا والغضب

"Three things are salvific in nature: Pious awe, reverence and fear of God (*Taqwa*) in both private and public [lives], moderation whether [one is] in wealthiness or poverty, and justice and fairness whether [one is] in happiness or anger". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Bazaz, Tabarani* and *Abu Na'eem* on the authority of Anas bin Malik [May God be pleased with him])

الاقتصاد و حسن السمت والھدی الصالح جزء من بضع و عشرین جزا من النبوۃ

"Moderation, beauty of physical composition, and righteousness are [collectively] a component from among more than twenty components (parts) of prophethood". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Abu Dawud* on the authority of Abdullah bin Abbas [May God be pleased with him])

Secondly, if for the time being, one has enough for bare minimum necessities then one should not become too perturbed and worried about the future. If one shortens one's hopes and aspirations and firmly ingrains this belief [in the heart] that one will necessarily get whatever sustenance is destined for one [through Divine ordainment] whether one has greed or not, one will not be worried [with anxieties and concerns] about the future. One does not find sustenance by means of greed or hope. A believer (*Mumin*) should have faith in the promise of one's Creator, the Exalted. The Divine ordainment is:

وَمَا مِن دَآبَّةٍ فِي ٱلْأَرْضِ إِلَّا عَلَى ٱللَّهِ رِزْقُهَا

"There is not a single living creature on earth, whose sustenance is not the responsibility of God." (Qur'an, Chapter 11, Verse 6)

Greed is the result of Satan's evil activities. He makes human beings fear poverty and starvation and incentivizes them to do wrong and evil things (*Munkirat*) [or transgressions against Divine injunctions, manifested in the form of wrong and evil things that go against the norms of human decency, civility, fairness and justice]. Satan tells one: "If you do not accumulate wealth and store things, you will have worries in the future, you can get sick and become humbled (needy). You will face humiliation of asking (begging) people in that case, and will have to roam around with a begging bowl from one door to another". In this way, the fear of [expected] hardship in future [especially in old age and in times of need], makes one endure hardship of seeking wealth the entire life. Satan looks at such a one being busy in this struggle and laughs at one saying: "This idiot is putting oneself into so much hardship due to the fear of the future and is [consequently being] heedless of God's remembrance. What does one even know if the apprehensions one is harboring [about one's future] will even happen?"

The greed in the human heart can be eradicated with complete certitude in God's plan [for everyone]. If a servant [of God] has this certitude that the destiny made by God in the distribution of sustenance and the plan devised by Him is truth, and if one struggles to achieve one's sustenance, one will surely get what God has destined for one. With this understanding, there is no reason why the evil of greed would not leave the heart. Instead, a servant should always remember that often times it happens, that God provides sustenance from a place that one cannot even imagine as Qur'an says:

وَمَن يَتَّقِ ٱللَّهَ يَجْعَل لَّهُۥ مَخْرَجًا ۝٢ وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ ۚ

"One who has pious awe, reverence and fear of God, God provides a way out [of all difficulties, trials and tribulations] and sustenance for such a one from sources that one cannot even imagine (i.e., from very unexpected sources as a Divine help)." (Qur'an, Chapter 65, Verses 2-3)

Abu Hazim (May God have mercy upon him) said: "I consider world as composed of two things: One that is for me and it's something I cannot get before its due time, even though I exert all the power of the heavens and the earth to obtain it. Second one is for someone else and it's something that I have neither received in the past nor do I expect to receive it in the future. It is because the Being (i.e., God) who safeguards my thing from [reaching] others is the same Being who prevents someone else's thing from reaching me. Then what's the use of giving my life away for these two types of things?" This is the cure of those insinuations of Satan that he instigates in the hearts of human beings about poverty and destitution, and makes them fearful of illness and neediness. This is the medicine of knowing [the disease and its cure].

Thirdly, one should know that contentment has the dignity of not needing anything from anyone and greed has the humiliation of asking [or begging or relying on others]. If one attains true comprehension of this dignity and humiliation, there will be no reason for self (*Nafs*) to not incline towards contentment. There is no room for doubt [left] that the voracity for more has nothing but hardship and humiliation [hidden in it]. No one is familiar with this hardship other than God. On the other hand, greed does not remain hidden from the human eyes as everyone understands that a certain person is greedy. What adds to this humiliation is the punishment of the Hereafter that must be endured, self-respect is lost separately, and one no longer has the capability [left] to follow the truth. One who has more greed is more in need of people and because of this need, is neither able to invite them to truth nor rebuke them for making mistakes, servility becomes one's temperament, fault is not a fault anymore, even if one thinks of a fault as a fault, one does not dare to say it, one's faith is destroyed for no reason, and Hereafter is ruined as well. An individual who does not prefer self-respect over the lust of the stomach is very foolish and weak in faith. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) has said:

عز المئومن استغناءه عن الناس

"The dignity of a believer is in *Istighna* from people (i.e., not eyeing or wanting anything from anyone, being oblivious to what people have, and putting all of one's hopes and aspirations in God alone for all of one's needs, while making all humanly possible efforts for fulfilling them in a dignified and self-respecting way)". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Tabarani* and *Hakim* on the authority of Sahl Ibn Sa'ad [May God be pleased with him])

Contentment has freedom and dignified self-respect in it. That's why, it is said that if you remain oblivious to someone [in terms of not wanting anything from one], you will become one's equal; and if you become in need of one, you will become one's prisoner; and if you do one a favor, you will become one's leader and guide.

Fourthly, one should ponder over this reality that how many imbecile, ignoramus and irreligious folks are wealthy. On the other hand, prophets [of God], righteous and rightly guided caliphs, prophetic companions, their immediate followers had simple lives. One should compare these two groups, listen to their accounts, study their lives then give this choice to the intellect to decide which group it wants to emulate and resemble - the scums [of the world] or the prophets and the pious. It is hoped that by exercising patience over paucity, contentment will become easy. A believer [in God and in the life of piety, moral rectitude, and righteousness that it entails] should think that adopting sumptuousness in food is not anything praiseworthy as a donkey eats more than a human being. Copiousness in copulation is also not praiseworthy as a pig does it much more than a human being. Adopting finery in dress and ride is also not praiseworthy as there are many like that among non-religious people who dress and ride well. If one is contented and is at peace with less, this undoubtedly is praiseworthy because

contentment with less and being at peace with less, is the hallmark (inherent character trait) of prophets and saints.

Fifthly, one should ponder over the dangers of accumulating wealth and possessions as explained in the section on harms of wealth and material possessions. On top of that, there is a danger of theft and loss in that. When one has wealth and possessions, there is apprehension [in the heart] that it may get wasted and when one is empty handed, heart has no sorrows of any kind [tied to safekeeping of wealth and possessions]. One should also think, "I will be prevented from entering the Paradise for five hundred years [because of possessing wealth, after the start of the Day of Judgment due to lengthy accountability on how it was acquired and spent] and if I exceed the bounds of necessity [in acquiring wealth], I will get counted among the group of wealthy and will get excluded from the list of poor (*Fuqara*) and poor will enter into Paradise five hundred years before the wealthy [as they remained patient and steadfast in their poverty, paucity, and adversity, with faith and righteousness]". One should always look at one's inferior [in terms of material possessions, wealth, social standing and power, and consequently appreciate the blessings of God and use them wisely with moral rectitude, instead of complaining about not having enough] and should not look at someone superior to oneself [in terms of the same criteria just mentioned]. Satan presents one's superior [in terms of worldly pomp, glitter, wealth, power, fame and prestige] as a superior model [to follow and emulate, and hence, ensnares them into a vicious cycle of jealousy, hate, enmity and material rat race to one's own detriment] and says (insinuates in the hearts): "Why are you so lazy? Look at the rich to see how they enjoy life! They eat delicious and tasty food and wear nice clothes". In the matter of religion, Satan presents paltry as a model and says: "Why do you put yourself in constraints (restrictions and hardship)? Look at so and so that despite having more knowledge than you [in religious matters], does not fear God and you are always trembling with God-fear. All people are in luxury (enjoying the good life), why are you different from them?"

These are the five matters that can help inculcate the quality (trait of the heart and inner disposition) of contentment. In them, the fundamental importance belongs to patience and lessening hopes [about matters related to worldliness]. While exercising patience, one should have this certitude that in this worldly life that is worth a few days, practicing patience in order to achieve the eternal happiness and endless triumph of the eternal life is the objective. It is just like a sick practicing patience over bitterness of medicines in order to attain health and physical wellbeing.

Excellence of Generosity: If one does not have wealth and material possessions, one should remain contented and refrain from greed. If one has wealth, one should be altruistic (preferring others over oneself) and generous, practicing good treatment of others and staying away from miserliness. Generosity is one of the [noble] character traits from the character traits of the prophets [of God] and is one of the foundations

from the foundations of salvation. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) interpreted it in these words:

السخاء شجرة من شجر الجنة اغصانها متدليته الى الارض فمن اخذ بغصن منها قاده ذلك الغصن الى الجنة

"Generosity is one of the trees from the trees of Paradise. Its branches are hung all the way to the earth. One who grabs one of these branches, that branch pulls one into Paradise". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Ibn Hibban* on the authority of Aisha (May God be pleased with her) and *Ibn 'Adi* and *Daraqtani* on the authority of Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him])

قال جبرئيل عليه السلام قال الله تعالى: ان هذا دين ارتضيته لنفسي ولن يصلحه الا السخاء وحسن الخلق فاكرموه بهما ما استطعتم

"Gabriel said that God said [by way of teaching]: 'This is the [Divine] path (*Deen*) that I have chosen for Myself. It can only remain in order by means of generosity and beautiful morals, manners, character, and inner disposition (*Husn ul-Khulq*). To the extent possible, honor the path [to God or *Deen*] by means of both of these [noble inner qualities]'". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Daraqtani fil Mustajad* on the authority of Jabir [May God be pleased with him])

ما جبل الله تعالى وليا له الا على حسن الخلق والسخاء

"God, the Exalted, has created His friends and intimates (*Awliya*) on beautiful morals, manners, character and inner disposition (*Husn ul-Khulq*) and on generosity". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Daraqtani fil Mustajad* on the authority of Aisha [May God be pleased with her])

خلقان يحبهما الله عزوجل وخلقان يبغضهما الله عزوجل فاما اللذان يحبهما الله تعالى فحسن الخلق والسخاء واما اللذان يبغضهما الله فسوء الخلق والبخل واذا اراد الله بعبد خيرا استعمله في قضاء حوائج الناس

"Two habits are such that God likes them, and two habits are such that God dislikes them. They are beautiful morals, manners, character, and inner disposition (*Husn ul-Khulq*) and generosity, and ones that He dislikes are bad morals, manners, character, and inner disposition (*Su ul-Khulq*) and stinginess. When God desires good for a servant, He gets the needs of people fulfilled through His servant". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Abu Mansur ad-Daylami* on the authority of Abdullah bin Umar [May God be pleased with him])

In one prophetic narration, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said: "The *Abdal* (a high category of saints and Gnostics) of my nation (*Ummah*) will not enter Paradise due to their prayer and fasting but rather they will enter into the Paradise due to the purity of their hearts (not having any negative thoughts, feelings, temperaments and inclinations in the hearts like hate, anger, jealousy, animosity, etc. towards anyone) and sincerity towards Muslims". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Daraqtani fil Mustajad* on the authority of Anas [May God be pleased with him])

Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri (May God be pleased with him) narrated from Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) that he said: "God has made many forms of *Ihsan* (*Ihsan* is not mere 'goodness' but it's going above and beyond with excellence in thoughts, feelings, words and deeds towards everyone) for His servants (all human beings). First is that, they love *Ihsan*. Secondly, the love of the doers of *Ihsan* has been placed in the hearts of His creations. Thirdly, God has directed the seekers of *Ihsan* towards the possessors of *Ihsan*. Fourthly, He has made the world [and worldly life] so easy for the doers of *Ihsan* (i.e., *Muhsineen* or those who have excellence in thoughts, feelings, words and deeds who go all the way out to do good to others with utmost sincerity without seeking anything in return, not even expecting a thank you in return) as it's like clouds raining water over a dry and barren land, imparting life to the earth and its denizens". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Daraqtani fil Mustajad*)

Condemnation of Miserliness

God says:

وَمَن يُوقَ شُحَّ نَفْسِهِۦ فَأُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلْمُفْلِحُونَ

"One who has been saved from the miserliness of one's soul, is the one who will attain salvation." (Qur'an, Chapter 59, Verse 9)

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ يَبْخَلُونَ بِمَآ ءَاتَىٰهُمُ ٱللَّهُ مِن فَضْلِهِۦ هُوَ خَيْرًا لَّهُم ۖ
بَلْ هُوَ شَرٌّ لَّهُمْ ۖ سَيُطَوَّقُونَ مَا بَخِلُوا۟ بِهِۦ يَوْمَ ٱلْقِيَٰمَةِ ۗ

"And those who are stingy in a thing that God has given them, out of His bounty and largesse, should not think that this [stinginess] will be of any good to them, instead this

will be very bad for them. On the Day of Judgment, they will be made to wear shackles made of things that they were stingy with." (Qur'an, Chapter 3, Verse 180)

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

ایاکم والشح فانه اهلک من کان قبلکم حملهم علی ان یسفکوا دماء هم
ویستحلوا محارمهم

"Save yourselves from stinginess because it has destroyed people before you because it made them commit bloodshed and declare permissible what God had forbidden [like illegally taking away people's possessions and their legitimate rights by means of theft, robbery, looting, deception, fraud, usurpation, injustice, discrimination and oppression]". (Narrated by *Hadith* collections *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Jabir [May God be pleased with him] and *Abu Dawud* and *Nasa'i* on the authority of Abdullah bin Umar [May God be pleased with him])

لا یدخل الجنة بخیل ولا خب ولا خائن ولا سیئ الملکة

"No stingy, no cunning (deceitful), no dishonest and no ill-mannered (ill-tempered) [person] will enter into the Paradise". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Musnad Ahmed* on the authority of Abu Bakr [May God be pleased with him])

ثلاث مهلکات شح مطاع وهوی متبع واعجاب المرء بنفسه

"Three things are deadly and destructive: stinginess that gets followed, desire from the lower base self (*Nafs*) that gets obeyed, and self-conceitedness (thinking highly of oneself with self-aggrandizement and notion of being always right)".

ایاکم والظلم فان الظلم ظلمات یوم القیامة وایاکم والفحش فان الله لا یحب
الفاحش ولا المتفحش وایاکم والشح فانما اهلک من کان قبلکم الشح
امرهم بالکذب فکذبوا وامرهم بالظلم فظلموا وامرهم بالقطیعة فقطعوا

"Safeguard yourselves against oppression because cruelty and oppression will transform itself into darkness on the Day of Judgment, and avoid vulgarity and licentiousness because God neither likes the vulgar person nor the vulgarity, and stay away from stinginess because it is the very thing that destroyed people before you. It commanded people to lie and they lied, it commanded them to oppress and they oppressed, it commanded them to sever relations [of family ties and kinship] and they severed relationships". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Hakim* on the authority of Abdullah bin Amr [May God be pleased with him])

According to a tradition, members of a delegation [that came to visit Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)] said in response to a question that their [tribal] leader is Jad ibn Qais. Prophet asked: "On what basis do you consider him suitable for your leadership?" The replied: "He is the wealthiest among us, but he is not remote from the blame of stinginess". Prophet replied: "That is a great sickness,

what sickness can be greater than stinginess? He is not qualified to be your leader". They asked: "Who should we then elect as our leader?" Prophet replied: "Your leader [from now on] is Bashr ibn al-Bara". [This tradition shows that Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) changed the tribal leader of a tribe due to his quality of miserliness and replaced him with someone who was generous, as a stingy person is not fit for any leadership role.] (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Hakim* on the authority of Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him])

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

خصلتان لا يجتمعان في مؤمن البخل وسوء الخلق

"Two traits do not get accumulated in a [true] believer - miserliness and bad morals, manners, character traits and inner dispositions". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Tirmidhi* on the authority of Abu Sa'eed [May God be pleased with him])

Imam Abu Hanifa (May God have mercy upon him) said: "A miser cannot be just and fair because such a one will take more than one's fair share and right or will try to take more than one's due share because of the fear that one may get into a loss. One who is in that state cannot be trusted for being honest". Prophet Yahya son of Prophet Zakariyya (John son of Zachariah - Peace and blessings of God be upon them both) saw Satan in his original form. He asked him: "Who do you like the most among people and who do you hate the most?" He replied: "I like a miserly believer the most and dislike a sinner but generous person the most". He asked him for the reason for that to which he replied: "A miser saves me from the trouble of misguiding one on account of one's miserliness [as it leads one to misguidance by making one tread the path of disobedience and distrust of God] and I am afraid about a sinning but generous person that God may accept one's generosity [and leads such a one towards the path of guidance, rectitude and reformation out of Divine largesse and favor for such a one]". Then Satan went away saying: "If someone other than John had asked me this question, I would not have responded to it".

Reality of Altruism and its Excellence

There are many levels of generosity and miserliness. In that, altruism has a very high degree. The meaning of altruism is to give one's possession and money to someone else despite one's own need, and generosity is to gift from one's possessions and money to someone whether needy or not that is not needed by one. Spending [in charity or helping others] despite one's own need is a difficult stage and very few people go through this stage successfully. Just like the highest degree of generosity is giving to others despite one's own need, similarly the extreme degree of miserliness is to not even spend on oneself [for one's own legitimate needs] even though one has the means and wherewithal to fulfil one's own needs. How many miserly are out there whose

treasuries are full of wealth, but they died suffering as they could not muster the courage to spend on their own cure. Heart is desirous of eating, but they do not have the courage to spend, although they don't mind eating if they get it for free. How great is the difference between these two individuals? Beautiful morals, manners, inner character traits, disposition, and qualities (*Husn ul-Khulq*) are Divine gifts that God grants to whomever He wishes and deprives them of, to whomever He wishes. There is no greater degree in generosity than altruism. God praised the companions of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon them all) in these words:

وَيُؤْثِرُونَ عَلَىٰٓ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ

"They prefer others over themselves even though they may be suffering from starvation [and are themselves in need]." (Qur'an, Chapter 59, Verse 9)

Aisha (May God be pleased with her) said: "Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) never ate to his fill for three days in a row until he died. If we so desired, we could have eaten to our fill, but we preferred others over ourselves". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Bayhaqi*)

A man became a guest of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him). At that time, there was nothing in his home that could be used for serving that guest. An *Ansari* (a resident of the city of Medina who along with many other residents, hosted the emigrants from Mecca who fled to avoid persecution therein) companion came to visit the Prophet who took that guest to his home and brought and served whatever food that was at his home at that time, and asked his wife to extinguish the lamp so that the guest [won't see anything and] would think that the host [and his family] are also having the meal, as he would extend his hand to the [empty] plate and pretend to be eating. The host companion did that and the guest ate to his fill. In the morning, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) told him that God liked what he did with his guest and revealed this verse of Qur'an to the Prophet:

وَيُؤْثِرُونَ عَلَىٰٓ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ

"They prefer others over themselves even though they may be suffering from starvation." (Qur'an, Chapter 59, Verse 9) (Narrated by *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*)

Nevertheless, generosity is one of qualities from the qualities of God (Divine attributes) and altruism is the highest degree of generosity on which Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) remained [all his life] to the extent that God praised this great quality of his and all of his other noble and sublime qualities in these words:

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ

"And no doubt, you (O Muhammad!) are at [the pedestal of] a lofty and sublime

character [that all humanity must emulate till the end of times for their own good and well-being]." (Qur'an, Chapter 68, Verse 4)

Sahl bin Abdullah al-Tustari (May God have mercy upon him - a renowned saint and Gnostic) said that Prophet Moses (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) supplicated to God: "O God! Show me some of the degrees of Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) and of his nation [before You]". [Moses, Jesus and many great Prophets before Prophet Muhammad were foretold about the advent of Prophet Muhammad for the culmination of the Divine guidance, that had been sent from time to time, to various Divinely appointed Prophets to convey to their nations at their times to help them stay on the path of Divine guidance and moral rectitude; this Divine guidance was culminated with Prophet Muhammad, to the entire humanity till the end of times] God said: "O Moses! You will not be able to endure that vision. However, I will show you one great degree from his great degrees [of his proximity to Me] due to which I have given him the highest degree over all of my creations". Then the veil was lifted from the eyes of Prophet Moses so he would have the vision of the wonders of the heavens and he witnessed the lofty degree of Prophet Muhammad and the brilliance of his degrees of Divine proximity and nearness that dazzled his eyes. Prophet Moses asked: "O God! How did Muhammad arrive at this degree?" God replied: "By means of a character trait and quality that I have specially characterized him with, and that quality is altruism [par excellence that he possessed all his life]. O Moses! If a person displays altruism even once in one's life, I will be ashamed to do one's accountability and I will let such a one enter into Paradise without any reckoning, to live wherever one's heart desires". According to a tradition, Abdullah bin Ja'far (May God have mercy upon him) travelled to inspect his distant land [that he owned]. During the journey, he stopped and resided in an orchid owned by a group of people (tribe). There was an Ethiopian [Muslim] slave working in that orchid. While doing that, the food of the slave arrived. At that moment, a dog came into the orchid and sat near him. The slave put a bread [from his own plate] before the dog who ate it. He put his second bread before the dog who ate it. He then fed his third bread to the dog who ate that as well until his own food was all gone. Abdullah ibn Ja'far who was watching the whole thing asked the slave: "What is your daily diet?" He replied: "It is what you just saw". Abdullah asked with astonishment: "Then why did you feed your [entire] food to the dog?" The slave replied: "The fact of the matter is that this orchid of ours is not the place for dogs to live. This dog comes from some distant place in hope of finding food to eat. I did not like that I eat while this dog remains hungry". Abdullah asked: "Then what will you do (eat) all day?" He replied: "I will starve (stay hungry)". Abdullah thought in his heart that he was criticizing the slave in his heart for his generosity (altruism) although he was more generous than him. Abdullah immediately called upon the owner of that orchid and purchased that orchid from him along with the slave and all the tools [used to take care of the orchid] and liberated and emancipated that slave. Not only that, he gifted that orchid to that former slave [as an appreciation for his self-sacrifice and altruism as he recognized his high degree before God for his relentless service in bondage, done with patient perseverance along with acts of altruism on top of it].

Umar (May God be pleased with him) narrates that a prophetic companion sent a goat head as a gift to someone (head is the most insignificant and cheapest part of livestock used for meat consumption - the person sending it as a gift could afford to get just that initially for himself but decided to gift to someone else whom he thought is more in need of it due to widespread poverty). The receiving companion thought that his certain brother (a fellow Prophetic companion) was more in need of it, so he gifted it to him. The third gifted it to the fourth and so on until it was sent to seven people then arrived back to the first [who originally gifted it, thus every receiving companion thought of another as more needy recipient in acts of utter altruism].

Cure for Miserliness

Miserliness is born out of the love for wealth and material possessions and there are two reasons for this love.

First Reason for Love of Wealth Leading to Miserliness: Is the love of the lusts and [materialistic] desires, achievement of which is not possible without obtaining wealth. It also includes long hopes [for a long life] because if human beings know that they will leave this temporary abode (world) one day, then they will not be miserly. It is because the amount that is sufficient for a day, a month, or a year is small and one can spend one's extra capital [on all worthy righteous endeavors, especially the ones that propel one on the path to God]. Sometimes one is not desirous of long hopes [for a long life] but one's children become substitutes for long hopes, and one struggles for their subsistence just like one does it for one's own subsistence. That's why, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

الولد مبخلة مجبنة مجهلة

"[Fear, apprehension, anxiety and planning for the future of one's] Children engender miserliness, cowardice and ignorance". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Ibn Majah* on the authority of Ya'li ibn Marra [May God be pleased with him])

If on top of that, there is fear of poverty and lack of trust on the arrival of sustenance [that comes from Divine Providence and Largesse], miserliness intensifies [leading one to hoarding, accumulating and usurping by all legal, illegal, ethical and unethical means even if it impinges on other's fair and legitimate rights].

Second Reason for Love of Wealth Leading to Miserliness: Is that one may love the wealth in its own right [and not as means to some other end like preservation of one's progeny or averting old age financial crisis]. Many people are such that they have enough capital for the rest of their lives provided they spend routinely, rather they have so much capital that there will be plenty left even after spending. They are deprived of offspring, having heaps of wealth but they don't feel like taking out *Zakat* (mandatory charity that must be given to poor from one's cash and gold savings that lasted for a

year in the amount of 2.5% of the value; livestock, agricultural produce and other assets are also subjected to mandatory charity as per the Divine law) to the extent that they are not even inclined to spend money on getting medical treatment for their own illness. Instead, they are lovers of *Dirhams* and *Dinars* (gold and silver coin currencies used in old times) who enjoy their presence with them and their control over them. They [secretly] bury them underground even though they are well aware that they will die [sooner or later one day] and after death, all this treasure will be lost or get into the hands of enemies [or strangers who are not even linked to them]. Despite that, they don't even allow themselves to eat from it or spend a small amount from it [on their own legitimate needs]. This is an immense and fatal disease of the heart and its cure is very difficult, in particular, it becomes incurable in old age. The similitude of such a person is that of a lover who sends someone as one's emissary to the beloved then start to love the emissary [instead of the beloved] and forget about the beloved. Wealth is like an emissary through which one fulfills one's needs. That's why, people love wealth and derive pleasure from it and the means of pleasure is also endearing. Then sometimes needs are forgotten and wealth becomes the real beloved. This is extreme misguidance. Anyone who understands the difference between gold and stone is ignorant, except when one knows that needs are fulfilled through gold (wealth) and what is left after fulfilling needs is equivalent to a stone.

Different Methods of Cure: Different methods of cure are as follows. It is known that every condition is treated by its opposite. Therefore, the cure for love of lusts is by means of contentment with less and with patience. Cure for hopes for long life is by means of abundance of remembrance of death (one's own mortality and end of one's journey through this world) and of the death of one's contemporaries. Decreasing the desire to accumulate wealth is by means of observing the wastage of accumulated wealth [that people leave behind when they die that are promptly taken over by others]. Cure for the inclination of the heart towards one's progeny is by means of this belief that just like the Creator has granted one sustenance, similarly sustenance has been created when children are born [as every child brings with one the sustenance that God has destined for one]. How many children are there who do not get anything from their father's inheritance but still live more prosperous lives? Such a person should also remember that one leaves wealth behind for one's children so they can live well, but after getting wealth [especially by way of inheritance,] they start to tread the path of evil. If someone's progeny is pious, righteous, and God-fearing, then God suffices them and they will not be in need of their father's inheritance. If they are evil and wrong doers, then leaving behind inheritance for them to help them with their evil is not right. Helping someone with evil is like committing a sin oneself. Heart can be cured by condemnation of miserliness, and by praising generosity and keeping an eye on the traditions that have been transmitted about torment meted out to the miser and making them a subject of one's contemplation. Heart can also be cured by extending one's contemplation to the objectives of wealth and material possessions, and thinking as to why they have been created? There is only one answer to this question that wealth and material possessions have been created for fulfilling the needs of life. Hence, only that much

wealth should be spent that is needed for one's needs. All else should be spent in the path of God and stored in this manner, as a treasure for the Hereafter [as wealth spent in humane, charitable, noble endeavors for helping others in need, gets immortalized as being spent in the path of God and becomes a treasure for one's eternal life as God recompenses one for it with immeasurable, unimaginable, eternal, wonderous and everlasting recompense]. These are the medicines that belong to knowledge and Divine Gnosis.

Mitigating Miserliness by Means of Forcing Oneself to Spend [in noble, humane, and charitable endeavors]: The trait of miserliness does not get eradicated without spending. Just like love does not come to an end without creating distance [with object of one's love] through travelling, even though leaving the beloved and separation is very hard on the self (*Nafs*). However, if this hardship is endured once, some means of consoling the heart is born at a distance by staying apart. Similarly, one who wants to mitigate miserliness should force oneself to separate from one's wealth and possessions by means of spending [in charitable causes to help others in need]. A good strategy for protecting oneself from miserliness is to deceive one's self and convince it to spend magnanimously to achieve fame and [social] respect as people would call one generous. Initially, this act will be show off but later on, it will become part of one's temperament and heart will desire to spend without desiring fame and repute. It is true that with this strategy heart becomes polluted with the evil of ostentation, but eradicating ostentation is not as difficult as eradicating miserliness. Fame and repute are means of consoling the heart after the demise of wealth. Just like infants are weaned off milk by distracting them with birds so they get busy with the play and forget about the milk. Once they become unconcerned with the milk, they are removed from the play as well. Other evil habits are in the same situation in that one is imposed on the other, for example, lust is imposed on anger to reduce its intensity and anger is imposed on lust to reduce its severity, but this strategy is effective for such an individual who has the quality of miserliness dominant over the love for fame and ostentation in one's temperament. In this manner strong is replaced with weak [habit or quality]. However, if someone is equally fame-loving as one is stingy, then there is no use of ending miserliness with ostentation because in this manner, one evil will end but another evil of the same degree [of intensity will start]. The indication of whether one has the dominant quality of miserliness or ostentation is that this person does not find it hard to spend for the sake of ostentation. If that is the case, it will be said that ostentation is dominant because one is willing to spend a beloved thing like wealth for the sake of ostentation (fame and repute). If one finds it hard to spend for the sake of ostentation, then it will be said that miserliness is dominant over one as one is not willing to spend for the sake of ostentation.

The example of eradicating these negative qualities through others is that components of a dead body [buried in grave] become insects. When nothing is left in the grave for these insects to eat then these insects eat each other until their numbers [continuously] reduce until only two big insects remain in the end. When they don't find anything to

eat, they attack each other and the dominant one consumes the other. Later on, the dominant insect dies of hunger due to not finding anything to eat. Similarly, it is possible that in evil qualities, the quality that is weak stops becoming food for the quality that is strong. The meaning of stopping the food for these qualities is to not act on their demands. In this manner, that quality will itself become weak and in the end will come an end. For example, the objective of a miser is to stop the wealth [from going away in spending]. If one acts against its demands by spending wealth even though it may be very difficult to do that, then the quality of miserliness will come to an end, and heart will start desiring to spend and there will be no burden on one's temperament.

Knowledge-based and Action-based Cures for Miserliness: Knowledge-based cure of miserliness is to gain knowledge of its harms and of the benefits of generosity, and action-based cure is to force one's temperament (oneself) to spend on charitable causes. Sometimes the quality of miserliness is so dominant and overpowering that it makes one deaf and blind, and one stops seeing any evil in miserliness and any goodness in generosity. In other words, one does not gain the comprehension and understanding without which the spirit of generosity is not activated, that in turn causes this quality [of miserliness] to remain forever until death. One who does not recognize a medicine, is not someone who will get cured.

Such is the state of all wealth and material possessions of the world [that is beyond one's real needs]. World (its foremost symbol is the wealth and material possessions of the world) is an enemy of God's enemies as it propels them to Hell, and also an enemy of friends and intimates of God because they have to endure hardships in exercising patience over [refraining from] it. It is also an enemy of God as it stops His servants (human beings) from treading His Path. It is its own enemy as it consumes itself as safeguarding of wealth happens by means of protectors [and various other means of safeguarding it] that [in turn] requires spending of wealth. Fact of the matter is that world (material possessions) is spent on safeguarding the world until it comes to an end and nothing remains. An individual who is aware of the harms of material possessions, does not get accustomed to them nor does one celebrate its acquisition or does one take more than one's actual needs. One who is contented with bare necessities, does not practice miserliness, because saving wealth and material possessions in the amount of one's needs, is not miserliness; and for that which is not needed, one does not put oneself into hardship by safeguarding it, but spends it [on charitable, beneficial endeavors to benefit fellow human beings, and in this manner uses it for attaining eternal happiness and endless triumph].

Human Obligations Regarding Wealth and Material Possessions: As it has been explained below, wealth in one sense is good and in one sense is evil. Similarity of it is like that of a snake that has both the poison and antidote and its poison is fatal [while its antidote is life-saving]. Likewise, wealth has both the poison and the antidote. One who can avoid its poison, is the one who keeps an eye on one's obligations [regarding wealth and its acquisition].

First Obligation: Is that one should gain knowledge of its purpose and try to find out why God had created wealth and material possessions and why is human being in need of it. After knowing it, one will earn what's enough for one's needs, will not safeguard more than what's needed, and will not give one's wealth to someone who is not deserving of it (one will spend it on noble worthy endeavors instead of wasteful endeavors that merely add to the pomp and glitter of worldly life).

Second Obligation: Is to keep an eye on the sources of income in order to avoid those sources of income that are purely forbidden [in the Divine law such as extortion, bribe, usury, theft, etc.] or forbidden for the most part such as wealth obtained from rulers. Similarly, one should avoid undesirable things that soil the purity of one's character such as gifts that have traces of bribe in them or asking others (or begging) that has humiliation in it.

Third Obligation: Is to consider the amount needed for one's personal economy (financial needs). One should not acquire more than what's needed [to avoid becoming blindly materialistic and greedy that instantly kills one's spirituality and spiritual strivings] nor an amount that is less than one's needs. [Human] Needs are related to three things: food, clothing, and residence. Each one of them have three degrees: ordinary, excellent, and medium (one that is in the middle of ordinary and excellent). Until human being is inclined towards less, one will be close to the limits of [one's genuine] needs and when exceed it, one will fell into a deep hole that has no end. We have provided details of these degrees in the Book of Abstinence from Worldliness (Chapter 14).

Fourth Obligation: Is to keep an eye on opportunities to spend [on noble and charitable causes as well as on one's needs]. There should be moderation in spending - there should neither be excessiveness nor constriction beyond the bounds [of moderation]. One should spend on lawful ends as one has earned through lawful means. Just like it's a sin to take [from others their wealth and possessions] unjustifiably, similarly it is also a sin to spend unjustifiably.

Fifth Obligation: Is to retain the right intention in taking, giving, stopping, and spending wealth and material possessions. When one takes material possessions [by legal and ethical means], the intention should be to get help from it in Divine worship. When one leaves behind material possessions, one should have the intention of abstinence from worldliness. When one does that, the presence of wealth will not be harmful. That's why, Ali (May God be pleased with him) said: "If an individual becomes the owner of all treasures of the world but one's objective is nothing other than attaining God's pleasure (*Rida*) then one will be called abstinent [from worldliness] (*Zahid*), and if one spends all the wealth but God's pleasure is not the objective, then one will not be called abstinent". All your movements and rests should be for the sake of God alone - they should either be [Divine] worship or helpful towards worship.

There is nothing [from small things one possesses] that cannot be helpful to one's path to God (*Deen*) such as shirts, pajamas, bed, pots, etc. All these things are essential for

life. Instead of keeping things that are beyond one's needs, one should think that other servants of God could benefit from them. That's why, if someone comes to you with one's needs and you have that as extra and beyond your need, then you should not refuse [to help].

One who follows these principles is like the one who extracts antidote out of a snake which is its real value and safeguards against its poison. Such a person is not harmed by the abundance of wealth. This distinction is attained by someone who has a perfect understanding of religion and has superior knowledge. One who accumulates wealth and thinks that such a one is like [some] prophetic companions (*Sahaba*) who possessed wealth, is like a child who lacks understanding and after seeing a snake-master controlling a snake, starts to catch a snake thinking that just like snake-charmer was able to catch the snake, one would be able to do the same. Such a child will certainly die. That is the difference between these two (the prophetic companions who had some wealth and ordinary person who considers oneself to be like them), however, one bitten by snake is obvious but one bitten by wealth is not obvious.

I will tell you what were the pious predecessors (*Salaf Saliheen*) and what are you. Some prophetic companions [who were a few in numbers] possessed wealth so that they would not be in need of begging or asking and so that they would be able to spend in the path of God. They acquired their wealth by legal means. They ate permissible (*Halal*) food, spent moderately, and made it a means of success in the Hereafter. They did not usurp anyone's rights, they did not practice miserliness, they spent most of their wealth and material possessions in the path of God, and some of them spent their entire wealth in charity by giving preference to others' needs over themselves [in truly altruistic way]. I ask you, "Are you also like that?" It is obvious that that's not the case. You do not even have the slightest resemblance with pious predecessors.

How were the Prophetic Companions? Prophetic companions were such that they loved [material] poverty [that came with spiritual richness]. They were devoid of the fear of poverty and starvation and had trust in God about their sustenance. They were happy about their destiny, accepting of the hardships [that they were compelled to endure]. They expressed gratitude in poverty and practiced patience in hardships. They glorified God in ease and comfort, they humbled themselves for the sake of God, and they were fearful of arrogance, superiority complex, and pride in abundance of material possessions. They took only that part from the world that was permissible for them, they were accepting of the amount commensurate with their real [as opposed to perceived] need, they rejected the world (worldliness), endured its hardships with patience, tasted its bitterness, rejected its comforts and blessings. Can you swear that you are like that? It has come to our knowledge that when world knocked at their door, they trembled with fear [of swerving from the path of God] and used to consider that they committed some sin whose immediate punishment was being meted out in the form of world (materialistic achievements). When poverty came, they used to welcome it and embraced it as the way of the righteous. We have received this tradition about

some prophetic companions that if they saw something in their homes in the morning, they used to get excessively sorrowful and if they did not find anything, they began their day with a smile. If anyone expressed surprise over that and said, "People are happy to see wealth in their homes but you get saddened", then they used to reply, "The reason I get saddened by seeing something with the family is that my household is not following the way of the household of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)". It has been narrated about some prophetic companions that their state of sorrow was worth seeing when they experienced prosperity and they were seen saying, "What does the world (worldliness) has to do with us?" If hardships poured upon them and constriction stepped foot in their homes, then they used to be happy and consider it a good omen for themselves and used to say, "Now our Lord has cast a glance of benevolence over us". These are the states and traits of the pious predecessors (*Salaf Saliheen*). In their light, it can be well decided if wealth is better or the poverty. Now can you swear [by God] and affirm that you possess the same [inner spiritual] states? You do not bear the slightest resemblance to these holy and sacred people.

How Are You? Now I will narrate your state and will shed light on your traits that do not match at all with the conditions and qualities of the pious predecessors. You become rebellious in wealth, become proud in prosperity, and dance with joy in ease and comfort. You have hatred for poverty even though it was a capital of pride for the prophets [of God]. You hate their capital of pride. You accumulate wealth out of fear of poverty, although this is harboring bad opinion of God and is a proof of lack of trust in His promise. This one matter is a just witness for your [impending] inauspicious end [of your worldly journey] that you accumulate wealth merely to fulfil worldly blessings, desires, comforts, and lusts, even though our Prophet (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

شرار امتی الذین غذوا بالنعیم فربت علیہ اجسامھم

"The worst (evil prone) people of my nation are those who eat sumptuous food and their bodies get nourished with that (i.e., they are used to the comforts, luxuries and good life of the world, and have no regards to the efforts and strivings one needs to make to excel in the spiritual path leading to God's acceptance and approval)".

A scholar has said that when people will come on the Day of Judgment searching for their good pious deeds, it will be said to them:

أَذْهَبْتُمْ طَيِّبَٰتِكُمْ فِي حَيَاتِكُمُ ٱلدُّنْيَا وَٱسْتَمْتَعْتُم بِهَا

"You have already achieved good things of life in the world [as you lived lavish, opulent lives and there is nothing left for you in the Hereafter]." (Qur'an, Chapter 46, Verse 20)

Rise up from your slumber of heedlessness! If you get deprived of the blessings of the Hereafter due to the blessings of this world, it would be a place of great deprivation, sorrow, and hardship. You also accumulate wealth so that you can express pride over

each other due to its abundance and consider yourself superior [on that basis]. However, we have received this tradition that whoever accumulates world for excessiveness and pride, will meet with God in such a state that God will be displeased with one. But alas, you don't have the slightest care for God's displeasure. You are immersed in your own state and oblivious to your final end. You find living in the world more endearing than going towards your Lord's proximity. You do not like meeting with God and God intensely dislikes meeting with you. If anything from the world is not available to you then your sense of deprivation is worth seeing. Your state is such that you liberate yourself from the restrictions of the religion in order to accumulate world (worldly possessions) and when you achieve it, you swing with happiness although Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

من احب الدنيا وسر بها ذهب خوف الآخرة من قلبه

"One who loves the world and is happy when one achieves it, the fear of Hereafter leaves the heart of such a one".

The amount of interest you have in worldly matters, you do not take the same amount of interest in matters related to the Hereafter. The suffering from sins is not as great to you as the suffering from not getting the world (pomp, glitter, glory, wealth, and material possessions). You do not fear sins (wrong doings) like you fear the loss of wealth. You can spend your entire capital to attain fame and power, but you are unable to help someone who is suffering. You can make the creations happy in order to gain dignity and honor, but you have no time to gain Divine approval. It is true that wealth hides your faults and people do not criticize you, but God is aware of your [true] state. But when do you care about God's knowledge and awareness [of how you really are]? You do not tolerate the humiliation of this world, but you are ready for the humiliation you are going to face in the Hereafter. These servants [of God] (creations) are more beloved to you than God. If this is not ignorance, then what is it? Your inner being is soiled with innumerable filth and is a source of uncountable faults, but you consider your wealth to be like the wealth of God's righteous servants. Alas! How far you are from the [conduct and character of] pious predecessors! By God, they were abstinent in permissible things to the level that you are not in impermissible things. They had more fear of minor mistakes [because of its impact on their standing with God] than you have for your major sins. Those [of us] whose character traits do not match with theirs (pious predecessors'), are neither like them in this world nor will be their companions in the Hereafter. The difference between the two groups of people is quite evident.

If you consider yourself to be the example of the pious predecessors then you should be contented with less, have abstinence with [even permissible and] legal material possessions, spend as much as possible in the path of God, become altruistic, not have any fear of poverty, have hate for greed for wealth, agree to less [materialism] and [ensuing] hardships, happy with paucity, consider humility as good, look at arrogance and high status-seeking with disdain, strong in your matters. Heart does not dislike guidance, you would have done accountability with your own self about God's

obligations and rights [in this manner], and [would have] molded all of your states in the mold of God's approval and acceptance. In this situation, you will not be made to stand for accountability [on the Day of Judgment] and will be counted in the category of the God fearing.

An Example of Greed for Wealth from the Traditions of Jesus: Jareer narrates from Laith (May God have mercy upon them both) that a man adopted the company of Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him). Both of them went somewhere until they reached a stream. They both sat by its side for a meal. They had three breads so both of them ate one each and third remained. Jesus went to the stream to drink water and when he came back, the third bread was gone. He asked his travelling companion about it who expressed lack of knowledge of that. Jesus remained quiet and resumed his journey. They found a female deer with her two baby-deer. Jesus asked one of the baby deer to come, who came and he slaughtered it, cooked the meat, and ate from it and served it to his travelling companion as well. Then Jesus said to the baby deer, "By the command of God, become alive!" and it became alive again. He addressed his travelling companion and said, "I ask you by swearing to the Being (God) who showed you this miracle, where did the third bread go?" He replied, "I don't know". After that both of them arrived in a valley that was full of water wherever eyes could see. He held his hand and crossed that valley by walking on water. When they arrived at dry land, he asked him again, "I ask you by swearing to the Being (God) who showed you this miracle, who took that bread?" He again replied, "I don't know". The journey resumed and this time he stopped when they arrived in a jungle. Jesus collected some soil, bricks and stones and said, "By the command of God, become gold!" When the heap of soil, stones and bricks converted into gold, Jesus divided it into three parts and said, "One part is mine, one is yours and one is for the person who took the third bread". His travelling companion immediately said, "I am the one who took the third bread". Jesus gave him all the gold [that was there] and separated himself from him and went forth. That man sat in the jungle with the heap of gold until two men arrived. Upon seeing this wealth, they became greedy and intended to kill that man and to snatch away all the wealth. He entreated, "Do not kill me, we can all be equal partners in this wealth. Firstly, one of us should go to the nearby village to get some food. Once we eat, we will distribute all of it among ourselves". One of two people who came, went to get some food, and started to think in his heart, "If I mix poison in the food, these two will die and I will become the sole owner of this wealth". On the other hand, the two people [waiting in the jungle] prepared a conspiracy to kill him once he had brought the food so they can equally distribute the gold into two halves among themselves. When the third man brought food from the village, they killed him then they themselves got killed by eating the poisonous food. The heap of gold stayed there while their three dead bodies laid around the gold eaten by vultures and dogs. After a few days, Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) passed by that place. When he saw that, he said to his travelling companions, "See, this is the state of the world, so you beware of it!"

Chapter 8 - Harms of Seeking Fame and Praise

Ghazali's eighth book in the third volume or quarter of his *magnum opus* "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God" deals with harms of seeking fame and popularity. These ills are so self-consuming that they take hold of one's life and divert one from the spiritual path - already outlined in the first part of this treatise - and rob one of inner peace and tranquility. Ghazali provides valuable insights into these ills, their origins, and prescribes ways for eradicating them from one's heart, consequently filling it with inner peace and tranquility. Fame-seeking promotes egoism and the consequent arrogance it begets, along with obsession with the self (*Nafs*) and blindness to its shortcomings, thus obliterating all possibilities of self-reformation and turning things around for the better. Seeking praise is another harmful trait that removes sincerity from good human actions and tarnishes them with self-serving, selfish, self-aggrandizing, and ulterior motives. This reduces the value of human endeavors to empty pretenses devoid of true substance and meaning. Ghazali provides cures for these inner ailments that impede inner peace and tranquility. Contents of this book by Ghazali are presented here in condensed form as follows [14]:

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

إني أخوف ما أخاف على امتي الرياء والشهوة الخفية التي هي اخفى من دبيب النملة السوداء على الصخرة الصماء في الليلة الظلماء

"I am most afraid of [two harmful inner traits of] showing off and discreet lust [of seeking fame, prestige and popularity] in my nation. They are more discreet than the crawling of a dark black ant on a dark black rock on a dark black night [as it is extremely hard to detect it, thus utmost care must be taken to safeguard oneself from these two detriments of the soul that may be buried in the innermost recesses of the soul dissuading one from the spiritual path]". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Ibn Majah* and *Hakim* on the authority of Shaddad ibn Aws [May God be pleased with him])

That is the reason why even great scholars (scholastic theologians) do not come to know of the knowledge of the detriments of ostentation and discreet lust so how can we expect the non-scholar worshippers (laymen) and people of God-fear to have its knowledge. Ostentation is among the last of the inner harms of the self (*Nafs*), and its discreet deceptions and people who are especially involved in them, are the scholastic theologians, worshippers, and those who are determined to tread the path of the Hereafter. This is because these people subjugate their lower selves (*Nufus*, i.e., plural of *Nafs*) after difficult spiritual struggles, protecting their selves from doubtful matters [that are hard to see and not just from forbidden things and matters that are obvious] and inclining them towards Divine worship [without distractions and turbidity of the soul

that has been transformed into having limpidity and clarity]. In this state, they become incapable of committing blatant sins from the bodily organs [due to the spiritual strivings that have done so far].

To get some relaxation from this hardship [of inner self-restraint], they do not find any other way but to display their good righteous deeds and [consequently,] attaining popularity and respect among people. This popularity gives them pleasure and reduces the intensity of the hardship, that is hard to get out of [due to their spiritual strivings that are difficult in nature]. These are people who express their righteous acts [in public] and desire to have the creation (fellow human beings) be aware of their worship and strivings. The knowledge of the Creator [about their acts of worship and spiritual strivings should have been enough but] is not enough and they find happiness in people praising them. They know that if we repudiate lusts and desires, refrain from doubtful things, and do not desist from the rigors of Divine worship, then people's tongues will be busy in praising us, exaggerate in our praise, will have in their eyes respect and dignity for us, they will consider meeting with us and looking at us a source of great honor and pride, they will take advantage of our prayers, follow our opinions, serve us, take the lead in greeting and saluting us, will honor and respect us in [social] gatherings, will give us concessions in buying and selling, keep us ahead [of everyone] in gatherings, will give us preference over themselves in food, drink and dress, they will remain humble and heads bowed towards us, and will be subservient to our [ulterior motives and] objectives. The lower self (*Nafs*) gets so much pleasure out of it that it does not remain difficult to leave sins and regularity of worship becomes easy, because the pleasure that lower self has perceived [from all the aforementioned benefits], is the crux of all pleasures. This person thinks that my life is for the sake of God and I am busy in worship according to the way God likes, even though such a one is indulged in hidden lust that is outside the perception of any intellect other than the strong and sound intellects [that are firmly grounded in truth and correct understanding]. Such a one thinks that I obey God with sincerity of my heart and am restrained from things forbidden by God (*Haram*), however, the lower self has given a place in itself to lusts and desires so that the worship is embellished in front of servants of God (human beings) and so that they find happiness in people's false praises. This nullifies the Divine recompense of their acts of Divine obedience [and worship] and they become deprived of the blessings of their righteous deeds and their names get written in the list of hypocrites even though they consider themselves intimates of God.

Condemnation of Seeking Fame and Popularity

Popularity [seeking or desire for achieving fame and following is] condemned and anonymity is liked and preferable. Anas bin Malik (May God be pleased with him) said that Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

حب المرء من الشر الا من عصمه الله يشير الناس اليه بالاصابع فى دينه و دنياه

"It is enough evil in one, except for the one whom God protects, that people point at one with their fingers regarding one's religion or the world (worldly status, fame, popularity on account of some ability, talent, power or wealth)". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Bayhaqi fi al-Shu'ab*)

Bashar (May God have mercy upon him) said: "I don't know of anyone who liked popularity and one's faith (religion) did not get destroyed and humiliated because of that. One who seeks fame, does not partake in the pleasures of the Hereafter".

Excellence of Anonymity: Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

رب اشعث اغبر ذی طمرین لا یئوبه له لو اقسم علی الله لأبره منهم البراء بن مالک

"There are many with disheveled hair and dusty shawls whom no one gives [any] importance to [as they are poor, looking insignificant, humble and from low social standing, whom people don't think much of due to their lack of any worldly status and standing] but if they swear by God [on something], God will surely bring about [into existence] what they swore on [as they have high status before God due to their Gnosis, intimacy and closeness to God] and Bara ibn Malik (a prophetic companion) is one of them". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him])

Abdullah bin Mas'ud (May God be pleased with him) said that Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

رب ذی طمرین لا یئوبه له لو اقسم علی الله لابره، لو قال: اللهم انی اسالک الجن لاعطاه الجن ولم یعطه من الدنیا شیئا

"Many with two shawls [and that's all they have for the garment that shows their poverty] are such that no one gives them any importance but if they swear by God on anything, God surely fulfils what they swore on. If they make this supplication, 'O God! I ask You for Your Paradise', God will surely grant them Paradise even though He may not give them anything in the world". (Narrated by *Hadith* collections *Ibn Abi ad-Dunya* and *Abu Mansur ad-Daylami*)

الا ادلکم علی اهل الجنة کل ضعیف مستضعف لو اقسم علی الله لأبره واهل النار کل مستکبر جوّاظ

"Should I not inform you about who the people of Paradise are? Every weak and humble who if swears by God, God will surely fulfill their vow (what they swore on), and the people of Hell are every arrogant, uncivilized, rude, and obnoxious person". (Narrated by *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*)

Fudhail (May God have mercy upon him) said: "If you can remain unknown then surely do so. Is it necessary to find fame and popularity and to collect praises [from people from all over]? If you are endearing and beloved to God, then being disliked in the eyes of people will not harm you". These traditions shed light on the condemnation

(undesirability and discouragement) of fame and excellence of anonymity (being unknown). Fame and popularity are not sought in their own right, instead, the attainment of power and prestige (social standing) is the objective, and liking power and prestige is the root of all turmoil. The seeking of fame and popularity is condemned but if one gets it solely by Divine Grace without desiring, seeking, and striving for it then it is not condemnable. However, it can become a cause of trouble (*Fitna*) for the [mentally, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually] weak. Nevertheless, the possessors of firm character will be protected from its trouble. The example of weak is like that of someone who knows how to move hands and feet [in water but still does not know swimming and is] among those who are about to drown. It is better that those about to drown not know the one who knows how to move hands and feet because when they see one moving hands and feet [in an effort to save oneself from drowning], they will grab hold of such a one. [Consequently,] They themselves will drown and cause the one making an effort to also drown. However, there is no harm of fame for the powerful, instead, the ones about to drown should be well familiar with the expert swimmer so they can grab such a one and reach the [safety of the] shore and attain salvation.

Condemnation of Love for Power and Prestige: God says:

تِلْكَ ٱلدَّارُ ٱلْأَخِرَةُ نَجْعَلُهَا لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُرِيدُونَ عُلُوًّا فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ وَلَا فَسَادًا ۚ

"We will give the abode of the Hereafter to those specifically, who do not even wish for self-aggrandizement (greatness) and turmoil on earth." (Qur'an, Chapter 28, Verse 83)

In this verse, the intention and desire for both turmoil and seeking greatness and glory are mentioned together in one place and it has been said that Hereafter is only for those people who are devoid of both intentions and desires [for spreading turmoil and seeking greatness as both of these are fatal for any spiritual aspirations]. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) has said:

حب المال والجاه ينبتان النفاق في القلب كما ينبت الماء البقل

"Love for wealth and fame grows hypocrisy in the heart just like water grows vegetation".

Meaning of Fame and its Reality: Fame and wealth are two elements of the world. Meaning of world is to become owner of things that can be benefited from [materially] and meaning of fame is to become owner (captivator and subjugator) of hearts whose respect, obedience and following is desired. Just like a wealthy becomes owner of money and thus attains one's objectives and is capable of fulfilling the desires and pleasures of the lower self (*Nafs*), similarly a famous person after becoming an owner (captivator and subjugator) of the hearts, uses them for the attainment of one's interests and objectives. Just like wealth is earned by means of various industries and occupations, similarly hearts are won by means of beautiful conduct in matters and by means of acts of benevolence. Hearts are conquered by means of knowledge and belief. For example, if it occurs to a heart that someone has a certain quality or ability then that heart will get conquered by that and commensurate with the power and intensity of its belief [in the quality and ability of another person], the heart will become

subservient to that person. The [sought after or admired] quality or capability does not need to be perfect in its own right, rather it is enough to be perceived as a perfection in the heart of the admirer. That's why, it (the heart of the admirer) sometimes perceives something as a perfection which is not a perfection in reality and the heart becomes subservient to the one being admired. It is because the subservience of heart is a condition (state) and the states of heart are subservient to its beliefs, knowledge, and imaginations. Just like temperaments that are enamored of wealth and material possessions want to control people, similarly people who like fame want to put the shackles of slavery in the necks of free human beings so that they attain complete control over their hearts so that they can use them for pursing their own [selfish] interests. The slavery (control) sought by the seeker of fame is far greater than the slavery sought by the seeker of wealth. This is because a wealthy and powerful person coercively becomes the controller of people whom, if given a choice, would not have any obedience for even a moment. The seeker of fame makes slaves out of [free] people out of their own free will and choice, and desires that people obey such a one [willingly and] happily and this obedience and subservience would become their second nature. It is very well understood from this that the objective of the seeker of fame is far greater than the objective of the seeker of wealth.

Nevertheless, the meaning of fame is to have a place in the hearts of people. In other words, having a firm belief in the heart about the presence of an attribute (quality that can be an inner trait) from among the attributes of excellence, distinction, and perfection. Proportional to the strength of this belief about perfection, will be the excess of the following [by the people], and proportional to that will be the seeker of fame's control and subservience of the hearts, and proportional to this control and subjugation of the hearts will be one's love for fame and resulting happiness. There are fruits and consequences of fame, for example, people's praises and exceeding the limits in that. One who is convinced of someone's perfection, does not remain silent from expressing this belief and praises the [perceived] perfection. From among the fruits of fame and prestige, is serving of the possessor of fame, as the person having this belief, dedicates oneself to the service of and remains subjugated to the possessor of fame who uses one as he or she pleases. Similarly, being altruistic to the possessor of fame, not showing difference of opinion, respecting, greeting and saluting first, making one a chief guest in gatherings, keeping one foremost in all matters, are among the fruits of fame that are born when one is given place in the heart and one's perfection is believed - whether they are due to one's knowledge, worship, beautiful habits, outer beauty, lineage, political authority, power, or some other aspect that people consider as perfection. All these [personal] attributes make room in the hearts and their possessors find respect [among people].

Why is fame so liked? As far as the question is concerned as to why some people are inclined to liking fame so much, there is hardly a heart that is devoid of it and it cannot be gotten rid of without intense spiritual strivings. Fame means becoming owner of people's hearts. Just like one is capable of fulfilling all of one's objectives by owning gold and silver, similarly, one gains the ability to fulfill all of one's objectives by owning and conquering hearts of people, because the cause of love of both things (wealth and

fame) is the same. That's why, hearts have both the love of the wealth and fame, but fame is preferable over wealth, hence, the love of fame is greater than wealth.

Why is Fame Preferred over Wealth? Fame is preferred over wealth for three reasons:

First Reason: Is that it is easier to reach wealth by means of fame compared to reaching fame by means of wealth. Therefore, if there is an abstainer from worldliness (*Zahid*) or a scholastic theologian (*'Alim*) whose respect has become firmly ingrained in the hearts, wants to earn wealth, can easily do so because the respecting hearts can spend their wealth on such people whom they respect and love. However, if one who is deprived of any traits of perfection, finds a treasure and such a one is deprived of fame and wants to obtain fame by means of wealth then that is difficult. It is known from this that one can earn wealth through fame but can't earn fame by means of wealth. In this respect, fame is more beloved.

Second Reason: Is that wealth can be wasted as it can be stolen, snatched, [government] officials and oppressors covet it. It needs protection, guarding and safe storages to store them. In fact, wealth has many harms [associated with it]. On the other hand, if you become owners of the hearts, then you will not have to face any harms because hearts have such deeply buried hidden treasures that they cannot be stolen nor do the robbers and looters have any access to them. The treasures of the hearts are protected in themselves and in that respect, fame is self-protected from seizure and theft. However, one danger is certainly present with treasures of the hearts that someone may be able to misguide (disillusion) them or malign the possessor of fame and is able to eradicate the belief [of perfections in the person of fame from the hearts of the admirers]. However, this danger is rarely faced, secondly, it (the belief of perfections in the admired person) can be defended without much difficulty, then [thirdly] this belief is generally so firmly ingrained [in the hearts] that the efforts of the maligner are [usually] not successful [as people do not give up their beliefs even though the beliefs may be wrong or baseless].

Third Reason: Is that the ownership of hearts is boundless and increases without any trouble. This is because when hearts are replete with one's respect and believe in one's knowledge and [good] deeds, then tongues are compelled to praise and glorify one. People themselves have this belief and express it to others who in turn get inclined to the same respect. That's why, [human] temperaments like popularity and fame because when one's mention becomes common, fame travels from city to city and from country to country that causes the hearts to get self-compelled for respect and honor. This chain of transmission [of one's fame] keeps extending and it has no end or limit. This is not the case with wealth. The wealthy cannot increase one's wealth without hardship and love. Fame is constantly on the move and does not stop anywhere. Wealth stays at one place and increases with [efforts to] increase. That's why, wealth is inferior to fame. These are some high-level reasons for preferring fame over wealth and if they are further elaborated then there can be innumerable reasons.

Love of wealth and fame is in the heart of every individual. There are two reasons for that. One reason is obvious, and everyone knows, and second reason is hidden and that is the bigger reason but it's very subtle. Dull minded and those without intellect are not expected to know but even people with understanding are not familiar with the reason. It is because this [subtle and greater] reason takes help from the inner vein of the lower self (*Nafs*) and from the secret demands of the human temperaments and only those people are familiar with it who take a deep dive into this ocean.

First Reason - Eliminating Fear: The upshot of this reason is that human beings are greedy for wealth due to the fear of the future. Bad opinions (apprehensions) [about one's future] make human being greedy, even though, one may have enough wealth for one's needs. But since, human beings are desirous of and expecting long lives, there is no limit to one's desires. There is this fear remaining in one's heart that the wealth that one has at one's disposition may come to an end and one may [consequently] become needy in front of others. When this [thought] occurs in the heart, fear surrounds one's heart and this fear does not get removed until another wealth does not become available to one so that it becomes a replacement for the first wealth if it gets lost due to an accident. Every moment, one is beset with these fears. Intense love for life compels one to estimate that one will live for a long time. Along with that, one assumes that proportional to elongation of one's life, one's needs will also increase. One also assumes that, "My wealth is beset with harms and hardships and could go to waste at any moment". This thought makes one fearful who tries to protect oneself from this fear by obtaining more and more wealth so that if some wealth is wasted, the second wealth will obviate the need to stretch the begging hand in front of others. This fear does not allow one to settle on any fixed amount of wealth, instead, one desires to become owner of the whole world. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) has said:

منهومان لا يشبعان منهوم العلم ومنهوم المال

"Two greedy people are never satiated - one who is greedy for knowledge and second who is greedy for wealth". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Tabarani* on the authority of Abu Mas'ud [May God be pleased with him])

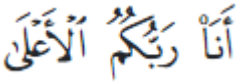
This is nearly the same reason for the love of fame. Individual who wants to establish one's high degree of esteem and value in the hearts of people living in far off countries, is in reality involved in this fear that one may sometime need to separate from one's homeland and live in another place, or those people may come and start living in one's homeland due to some reasons. In that situation, their help will certainly be needed. Nevertheless, this possibility exists, and it is not impossible to seek help from people living far. That's why, if one's high degree of esteem and value is established in their hearts then this matter is extremely pleasant and pleasurable.

Second Reason: This is a stronger reason and its upshot is that the soul is a Divine command. Qur'an has mentioned the soul in these words:

وَيَسْـَٔلُونَكَ عَنِ ٱلرُّوحِ ۖ قُلِ ٱلرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّى

"They ask you concerning the soul. Tell them that soul is from the command of my Lord." (Qur'an, Chapter 17, Verse 85)

The meaning of soul being "Lordly" (belonging to the Divine command) is that soul is related to the secrets of the spiritually unveiled knowledge (*Uloom al-Mukashafa*) whose disclosure is not permitted [for the Gnostics out of Divine wisdom to preserve its sanctity from the masses who are not worthy of it due to their lack of understanding and appreciation for it, and to reserve it for the best of the humankind - the spiritually illumined souls who strive for this knowledge of tremendous import that is among the highest of all knowledges]. This is because if its disclosure was allowed, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) would have certainly disclosed the reality of the soul. Before any further discussion on this topic, it should be known that soul is inclined towards four types of qualities (inner traits and dispositions of the temperaments). [Firstly,] Animalistic qualities like eating and copulation. [Secondly,] Bestial qualities such as killing, beating, causing pain [and suffering]. [Thirdly,] Satanic qualities like deception, cunningness, and dissuading [people from the correct path of guidance and rectitude]. [Fourthly,] Divine qualities like arrogance, honor, and superiority. The reason for heart's inclination towards these variegated qualities is that human being is made up of some principles that are lengthy to explain. It is enough to say here that human being has the "command of the Lord", that's why, one is temperamentally inclined to like lordship. The meaning of lordship is uniqueness in perfection and perseverance in existence. This is because sharing in existence is an indication of imperfection. That's why, the perfection of sun is in its perseverance in existence. If there had been another sun then it would have been an imperfection for it because at that time, it could not have been said that sun is unique and alone in its perfection. Unique in existence is God [alone] because none other besides Him exists. Whatever is there besides God, is an indication of His Omnipotence that do not exist on their own, instead, their existence is by means of the existence of God. Co-existence in existence demands equality in rank and equality in rank is an imperfection in excellence and perfection. Perfected one is only the one who does not have an exemplar (co-sharer) in one's rank. Light of the sun enlightens the whole world then it is not its imperfection, instead it is an indication of its perfection. Imperfection would be when another sun with the same status and rank had been there and it would have been oblivious to the second sun. Same is the state of all existences besides God; these are also maintaining their existences after finding the light of life from the real Sun (God). All these existences are subservient to the Real Existence (God) and they are not the ones to be subservient to. However, lordship (*Rububiyah*) means being unique in existence. Every human being temperamentally wants to be unique in perfection. That's why, some spiritual guides (saints and Gnostics) have said that there is no human being who does not have in one's inner being that which was elaborated by Pharaoh when he said:



"I am your Lord, Supreme." (Qur'an, Chapter 79, Verse 24)

However, human being does not have a way of becoming superior and supreme. One wants perfection but does not have enough capability to become perfect. Slave hood (slavery) to God (*Ubudiya*) has a forceful power over the lower self (*Nafs*) and lordship (*Rububiya*) is temperamentally endearing and beloved. Due to this connection [that the soul has] with the [Divine] Lordship that has been alluded to in this saying of God, "Tell them that soul is from the command of my Lord", the love and desire for perfection does not end and one derives pleasure from its [mere] imagination, although human being does not reach the culmination of perfection. Every living being loves one's being and the perfection of the being, and hates death that causes the end of one's being and the quality of [perceived and supposed] perfection. If being would not come to an end, then that would be considered perfection, as [consequently,] one would have superiority and dominance over most other beings. That's why, human being likes authority, superiority, and dominance in one's temperament. However, it will be considered as dominance over things when an individual has the power to change and cause impact out of one's intention and desire, and those things are subjugated to one, who is able to do to them what one desires. In this manner, it became beloved to a human being to have dominance over things that are with one.

Types of Beings: Beings that are present are of several types. Some beings do not accept any change or impact like the Being and Attributes of God. Some beings accept the change but creations [like human beings] cannot have any control over them like heavens, stars, heavenly dominions, angelic beings, *Jinns* (supernatural invisible creatures that are present on earth), devils, etc. Third kind includes those beings in whom human being can cause a change like components of earth, minerals, plants, animals. Among these beings, are the hearts of the people that accept change and impact just like the bodies, and just like the capability of change and impact existing in animals' bodies.

Desire for Domination on the Basis of Knowledge: The division of beings [that have existence] is that some have the capacity of human impact like things belonging to earth and some do not have any human impact like the Being of God, angels, and heaven (sky and what's beyond in the universe and even beyond that). That's why, human being desired that since they cannot dominate the heavens (universe and what's beyond), they should achieve dominance by means of knowledge and attain understanding of its secrets and subtleties and this is also a form of dominance. It is because a thing that is encompassed by knowledge enters into the knowledge and a scholar is termed as dominant over it [because of knowledge, although there is no physical dominance]. Desire for dominance compelled human beings to get familiar with the wonders and mysteries of God, angels, universes, stars, mountains, and oceans as knowledge is also [a way of] dominance and dominance is also a type of perfection. Perfection of knowledge imbues human beings with happiness.

First type [of dominance on the basis of knowledge] is related to the things present on earth. One does not find knowledge sufficient [regarding earthly things] but wants the dominance of control and impact so that one can carry out the act of impact and change as one desires. Things present on earth are of two types - bodies and souls. Bodies

include things such as gold, silver, material possessions, etc. In these things, human being desires to be able to change and impact in a practical way, keep them wherever one wants, give them to whoever one wants, and not give to someone one does not want. To have dominance and power over a thing is called "ability" and ability is perfection. Perfection is a trait of Lordship and Lordship is beloved to human temperament. That's why, one loves wealth, whether one needs it or not, in fulfilling desires such as clothing, eating, drinking, and fulfillment of lusts. One impacts the bodies and souls but is unable to conquer the hearts because hearts are not conquered (or subjugated) without the belief of perfection. However, anger becomes a replacement of perfection. One finds pleasure even in anger and power, because even in these, control and prerogative have an involvement.

Second type [of dominance on the basis of knowledge] includes the selves (*Nufus*) and hearts (*Qulub*) of human beings. Nothing is finer and precious than them on the face of the earth. It is the desire of human beings to gain dominance over the self and heart, conquer them and be able to do whatever change one wants. The reason for this desire is that conquering the hearts and changing them is the perfection of dominance and it has resemblance with the qualities of Divine lordship (*Rububiya*). This is because hearts do not get conquered without love, and love does not happen without the belief about one's perfection, and every perfection is beloved and endearing because it is related to Divine attributes, and Divine attributes are endearing to one's temperament because they are intertwined with the Divine command (the soul) [that is inclined towards lordship], and human being has this Divine command (soul) that cannot be annihilated by death nor does it gets eaten up by soil [when body is buried in earth upon death]. This [Divine command which is the soul in every human being] is the abode of faith [in Divine existence, reality, light, guidance, and injunctions] and Gnosis, Divine intimacy, and proximity. This very thing (soul) is the vehicle for taking one to God and is the cause of Divine vision.

The upshot of what has been written so far is that the meaning of fame is the subjugation of the hearts. One for whom hearts are conquered, is able to gain domination and control over them and domination is perfection which in turn is an attribute of Divine lordship. That's why, [human] temperaments are in love with knowledge and power. Wealth and fame are reasons for power. Since there is no limit to knowledge, that's why, till a thing remains outside the bounds of knowledge and power over it, the desire and enthusiasm for it will not be satisfied and deficiency [in human perfection] cannot be removed. That's why, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) has said about the person greedy for knowledge and the person greedy for wealth that they are never satiated. Hence, it is proven here that what's sought is the perfection and perfection is attained by means of knowledge and power. There are innumerable degrees of that. Every human being gets the pleasure and happiness to the extent of the degree of perfection one has. This is the reason for the love of fame and wealth which stays in spite of fulfilment of lusts. In other words, love of fame and wealth does not diminish even though the needs get fulfilled. In the matter of knowledge, human beings love it even though it may not be beneficial in achieving any objective and at times, becomes an impediment in the way of achieving

one's objective. However, human temperament endures the hardships of the path, overcomes its difficulties and decorates the heart with the wonders of [variegated] knowledge because knowledge is a form of domination over the subject of knowledge, and this domination is perfection, and perfection is a Divine attribute (quality) which is why it is intrinsically loved and coveted.

Real Perfection

The knowledge of God's Being and attributes, His actions, His wisdom in heavens and earth, world and the Hereafter, and matters belonging to them in right order of importance, is the real perfection [that is attainable by human beings]. One who is endowed with this perfection will be the one closer to God [in the state of God's Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*)], and this perfection of the self (*Nafs*) stays even after death, and will become an effulgent light [of Divine Gnosis leading one to eternal happiness and endless success] about which Qur'an has said:

يَسْعَىٰ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا أَتْمِمْ لَنَا نُورَنَا

"Their light will forge ahead of them towards their front and right and they would pray, 'O our Lord! Perfect this light (illumination) for us in an everlasting state'." (Qur'an, Chapter 66, Verse 8)

In other words, this Gnosis will become such a capital (asset) that the knowledge that was not known in the world will also get known. The similitude of this is like a person having a small lamp [with wick and oil] with an enfeebled light, who uses it to light another lamp that has a stronger light (illumination). One who does not even have a lamp, can neither light up another lamp nor perfect the original light. One deprived of Gnosis (Divine knowledge, closeness, and intimacy with the Divine) is like the one who is deprived of an illuminating lamp. Its example is like that of:

كَمَن مَّثَلُهُۥ فِى ٱلظُّلُمَٰتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِّنْهَا

"[One who is illumined with Divine illumination in a state of Gnosis] Can be like the one who is immersed in darkness [upon darkness], not able to come out of it?" (Qur'an, Chapter 6, Verse 122)

Instead, the similitude of the darkness one is in, is like that of:

أَوْ كَظُلُمَٰتٍ فِى بَحْرٍ لُّجِّىٍّ يَغْشَىٰهُ مَوْجٌ مِّن فَوْقِهِۦ مَوْجٌ مِّن فَوْقِهِۦ سَحَابٌ ۚ ظُلُمَٰتُۢ بَعْضُهَا فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ

"Or they are as if in the darkness of a deep ocean, covered with a big wave then another wave on top of it, then dark clouds over [the ocean] with more darkness [of a dark night] on top of it [hence, such an individual in enveloped in layers of darkness upon darkness, being unable to see any light or to come out of this absolute darkness]." (Qur'an, Chapter 24, Verse 40)

It is learned from this that Gnosis (*Ma'rifa* or Divine knowledge and intimacy) is the fountainhead of all good and of eternal happiness and endless triumph (*Sa'adah*). The situation with knowledge of other things is that some of them are completely useless like poetry and knowledge of genealogy. Some are such that they help with the Divine Gnosis. The knowledge of purification of the soul leads to guidance towards and capacity of God's Gnosis. All these knowledges are like resources towards the attainment of Divine Gnosis. Perfection is in Divine Gnosis and in recognizing the Divine attributes and actions and in that lies the knowledge of all existences because all existences are in reality the Divine actions. Therefore, anyone who looks at anything in this world with the perspective of that being an act of God that is integrated with His intention, power, and wisdom, that [look and understanding] in reality is a component of Divine Gnosis.

This explanation [so far] was about knowledge. Now listen to this about power. In terms of power [over something], a servant of God (human being) does not possess real perfection. Real power only belongs to God. Actions that come into existence from servant of God's intention, power, and movement, in reality, come into existence because of God bringing them into existence. Summary of this explanation is that the perfection of knowledge stays with a servant [of God] even after death and makes one reach God but in the perfection of power, we do not see any perfection in terms of power in the servant [of God]. However, power (physical capabilities) is a means of [attaining] perfection of knowledge. All the bodily organs, capabilities, and faculties, by means of their power, cause one to arrive at the reality of the perfection of knowledge. To grant power to these organs and faculties, there is a need for wealth and fame so that by their means, one can obtain food, clothing, and residence. If one did not use them to attain Divine Gnosis, then it is obvious that such an individual does not have any good insight. Their only advantage one has is to use them merely to get some pleasures that will come to an end [one day]. Those who think of these transient pleasures as perfections, are total ignoramuses. Most people have been destroyed by falling into this deep hole of ignorance. They think that to gain authority over bodies by force, having expansiveness in wealth, and greatness achieved by means of fame in the hearts of people, is what perfection is all about. When this ignorance becomes belief then they consider this as endearing and get busy with its attainment and die while pursuing it and neglect the real perfection that brings one closer to God and angels [due to the angelic qualities that are pure and devoid of any sins or blemishes]. That perfection is the perfection of knowledge and freedom. Discussion of knowledge has been presented before. The meaning of freedom and liberation is to get liberated from lusts and the sufferings of the world, and to overcome and control them as overcame by angels, who are neither misguided by lusts not incited by anger. Eradicating the effects of lusts and anger from the self (*Nafs*), is perfection and this in reality is the quality of angels. The characteristic of God's attributes of perfection is that there is neither any decline or change in them nor is there any impact of anything on them. In this respect, to the extent an individual is far from the influence and change impacted by [worldly] impediments [distractions, entanglements, deceptions, etc.], one will be closer to God and will resemble angels to that extent and will have a rank before God to that extent. This is the third perfection separate from the perfection of knowledge and power.

Love for Praise in the Lower Self and Hate for Criticism

Reasons for Love of Praise in the Lower Self: There are four reasons for this pleasure experienced by the lower self (*Nafs*):

First Reason: Which is the strongest reason is that the praise makes one realize that one is endowed with perfection, and it has been explained before, that perfection is loved and one gets pleasure in getting everything that is loved. Therefore, whenever self realizes its perfection, it gets extremely happy about it and attains indescribable pleasure. Realization of one's perfection happens when another person praises one. The quality or trait that is praised, sometimes is obvious and sometimes it's dubious. If that trait is obvious and is realized, then pleasure derived from its praise is relatively less but it's there for sure. For example, to praise someone that "You are tall and have a beautiful complexion", even though it is apparent and felt and the praised is aware of them, but one does not always perceive these traits, instead, one is somewhat negligent of them. When one realizes [that one has those traits due to someone's praise], one gets [inner] pleasure from that. If one has a [praiseworthy] trait or quality that is doubtful then a praise received for that quality brings in its fold a pleasure that cannot be compared with any other pleasure. For example, [praising someone] by saying that "You are a great scholar" or "You are very God-fearing and righteous" or "You are very beautiful". Human being has doubt in the perfection of one's knowledge, piety and beauty and desires to somehow dissipate that doubt, so that these traits become certain (one gets certitude in possessing perfection in these qualities) and no other person would be comparable to one in those traits. When someone else mentions (praises) these traits, one gets satisfaction and certitude [in their existence within oneself] and in this way this pleasure intensifies. This pleasure increases even more when one is praised by an intelligent and wise who is aware of the secrets of the beauty of knowledge, piety and scrupulousness and does not like to utter anything without researching. For example, if a teacher praises his or her student's intelligence and comprehension then the student is greatly pleased with that. If another person lavishes praise who has the habit of saying things without thinking and comprehending and who is not intelligent and aware, then this pleasure is reduced. Reason for hating one's condemnation [or criticism] is that one gets to know the faults of the self (*Nafs*) because of someone pointing them out. One feels the pain of realizing one's own faults and this pain intensifies when an intelligent and wise person points out one's faults.

Second Reason: Is that the praise argues for the fact that heart of the person praising is subjugated by the praised and such a one is a follower, admirer, and subservient to the will and desire of the praised. Captivating and subjugating hearts is beloved to human beings. When one realizes that now one owns the hearts, one feels pleasure and this pleasure increases when praise comes from the tongue of the person who has a wide net of power and control. It is because by entrapping the heart of such a person,

there is expectation of reaping maximum benefits, like the kings, authorities, or prominent individuals. This pleasure diminishes to a very low level when the person praising neither possesses any importance in the society (has no social importance) nor has anything in one's sphere of influence or is able to personally benefit anyone. To gain control over the heart of such a person is tantamount to controlling an insignificant and lowly thing. The heart of the person condemning, or criticizing is not owned by one. The pain emanating from that will be more or less depending on the social importance of the condemner being high or low.

Third Reason: One's praise not only makes one's heart subjugated to the person being praised, but it is possible that the praise impacts some other people whose hearts in turn get subjugated to the praised. In this respect, the praise (praising comments) of those people is highly effective, whose utterances are listened to attentively and whose praise and condemnation are believed. Then this praise must be done in a big open gathering so that maximum number of people hear it. The larger the number of audience and the more important the personality of person praising, the greater the pleasure would be from that praise and to that extent as well would be the pain of condemnation being intolerable to the lower self (*Nafs*).

Fourth Reason: It is learned from the praise that the person being praised has an impressive personality, that's why, people are restless in profusely praising such a person, whether it is by free will or by [a compelling inner compulsion or] force. Having an impressive personality is also an adornment for one as it has a type of domination and power in it. This praise is not devoid of pleasure even when the person praising does not have good thoughts about the person praised who is forced to praise out of fear. In this case, one gets pleasure due to another person's perturbation and fear and due to one's domination and power [over others]. Depending on how weak and perturbed the other is, one will get pleasure proportional to that.

Sometimes these four reasons get accumulated in the same person doing the praise. In that case, the pleasure [one gets from others' praise] increases manifold. If all these reasons do not [simultaneously] combine in one person, the pleasure from praise will be proportionally reduced.

Cure for Above-Mentioned Reasons of Loving Praise: First cause can be cured by the praised person to have this certitude that the one praising is not truthful in one's saying. For example, if someone praised one by saying, "You are from a noble lineage, you are generous, you are a scholar, and you refrain from evils", and the one being addressed or praised knows that one is not like that and instead, is quite opposite to that, then the pleasure that is born in the heart with that praise will come to an end. Only that pleasure will remain that is achieved when one gains domination and control over someone's heart or tongue. If one [further] realizes that what the person praising is saying, his or her heart is [actually] devoid of that belief and [on top of that] I am also devoid of those qualities [that the person praising has mentioned] then the second pleasure [of having domination and control over hearts] will also come to an end. Only one pleasure will remain after this [which is the pleasure one gets by realizing that one

has control over people's tongue]. In other words, the only pleasure that will remain is of the realization that the one praising is compelled to open up one's tongue in my praise because of my fear and awe. A person who is not serious in praising but instead, is merely praising one as a joke, then all pleasures [including the last remaining pleasure of having control over someone's tongue] will come to an end because out of three reasons, none of the reasons remained. From this explanation, you would have understood by now as to why lower self (*Nafs*) derives pleasure from praise and finds pain in condemnation. These reasons [for praise] have been mentioned so that the method of cure for love of fame, and praise and fear of condemnation can be understood. It is because until the reason for a disease or illness is understood, its cure will not be possible because cure is another name for ending the reasons for an illness.

Cure for Love of Fame

One who has the love of fame dominating the heart, spends all of one's energy on pleasing the creations, and is busy with establishing friendships with them, and is very mindful in one's words and deeds of people respecting one more and more, after listening to one and seeing one's actions. This matter is a sea of hypocrisy and fountainhead of turmoil. It engenders laziness in worship and at times one is compelled to commit forbidden and immoral things to entrap the hearts. Hence, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) resembled the love of wealth and fame and their destructiveness to one's faith to two [hungry and] ferocious wolves [that are let loose is a flock of sheep]. He has furthermore said that the love of wealth and fame grows hypocrisy, just like water grows vegetation. Hypocrisy means difference between the outer and inner being and difference between words and deeds. An individual who is searching for appreciation and degree of veneration, displays such excellent habits and traits that one is actually devoid of. This is pure hypocrisy. Love of fame is a lethal disease. Its cure and eradication from the hearts of believers is extremely important. This disease, like disease of [loving the] wealth enters into the core of the heart [and becomes an inner trait]. Its cure is also made up of the combination of knowledge and action.

Knowledge Based Cure of Love of Fame: Is to find the reason that caused one to get involved in the disease of loving fame. That reason is to gain control over people's soul and bodies. Even if one attains that, its final end is [in the] death [of the individual that will come eventually]. It is not counted among the righteous deeds that last forever [*al-Baqiyat us-Salihaat*]. Instead, if all the people of the earth start prostrating before you and keep their foreheads in your feet for fifty years even then, neither the prostrators will remain nor you will stay alive, and your final end will be the same that has been meted out to countless people of glory, splendor and prestige before you. To leave the blessings of faith [in God and the noble spiritual path leading to Him] that is the everlasting life that never ends, for such an ephemeral and transient thing [like popularity and veneration in the hearts of people] is in no way appropriate. One who is familiar with the reality of real perfection as well as [false] imagined perfection, does not

give any importance to [having] fame [and popularity]. Instead, one who keeps an eye on the Hereafter, does not even give it the amount of importance that is given to a dust particle. Such an individual imagines death in front of one and considers the world (worldliness) as lowly. The righteous [of the past] had all their focus on the Hereafter and the work they did for it was pious awe, reverence, and fear of God (*Taqwa*). They had known this [with certitude] that Hereafter is for those with pious awe, reverence, and fear of God (*Taqwa*) and for them, there was nothing lowlier than fame and wealth. Most people's eyesight is weak and focused only on the world. The light of their eyes does not expand to beholding the reality and final end of all matters as [elucidated by] this Divine saying:

"Instead, you prefer the worldly life, even though, Hereafter is far better and durable (everlasting) than the world (worldly life with its worldliness)." (Qur'an, Chapter 87, Verses 16-17)

One who is involved to this extent in fame seeking, should cure one's heart by imagining the worldly harms and hardships, in other words, should keep an eye on dangers encountered by famous people in the world - every person of fame, prestige and high status while having some friends, have no shortage of enemies. These people are always targeting an opportune time for inflicting harm and whenever they get an opportunity, they unleash their enmity. The people of high status themselves, perpetually have this fear of losing the status they have or hearts getting changed (turned over) that have dignity and respect for them. Hearts are embattled in between honoring [whom they like and admire] and avoiding [whom they dislike and abhor]. An edifice built with its foundations in the hearts is not more durable than a palace built on sea waves. Concessions to hearts, protection of fame and prestige, conspiracies of the jealous, resisting the harm caused by enemies, etc., are those worldly harms and hardships that embitter the pleasure of fame. The punishment of the Hereafter for fame seeking is separate from that. One does not get the amount of worldly benefits [from seeking fame] that are expected, instead, there is so much piling of hardships associated with seeking fame. Those people who like fame, should cure their foresight (mystic insight or *Baseerah*). Those who have depth in their foresight (mystic insight) and strength of faith, do not pay slightest attention to the world (worldliness).

Practical Cure of Love of Fame: The practical cure of this disease is to do something for eliminating one's fame [and hold] in other people's hearts so that one would be reprimanded until people degrade one in their eyes. Consequently, feeling of popularity is dispelled and one becomes accustomed to the life of seclusion and anonymity and contends only with one's popularity with God. Only this much is permissible that one does the things from among actions that leaves one with no prestige among people. There is a tradition that a king intended to get close to a pious worshipper. When the worshipper learned that the king had come to his gathering, he asked for food to be brought out for him and started to eat big morsels. When king saw him eating like that, he could not keep his good opinion of him and that worshipper became debased in his eyes. He then abandoned his intention to get close to him and to become his follower

[in the spiritual path]. Worshipper breathed a sigh of relief and thanked God for protecting him from the king. People of spiritual states sometimes cure their selves through these methods, and they consider them beneficial for their hearts [in terms of protecting them from spiritual ailments]. By acting on such methods, they rectify their inner states and eliminate any excesses [or deviations from moderation, balance, and harmony in their inner beings].

The Best Method of Removing Love of Fame: Its best cure is to adopt [social] seclusion from people [in all shapes and forms whether modern means or traditional, except for necessities and urgencies] and become unknown or go to a place where no one knows one. Adopting seclusion in home is also not devoid of danger because one will become famous in the entire village [or municipality] that so and so spiritual traveler has adopted seclusion from all people to get attached to God, so that even seclusion will become a source of ingraining belief in people's heart [about one's piety, goodness and high spiritual state]. It is also possible that the person practicing seclusion may think that one does not have the love of fame remaining in the heart, although, this love may be lurking in some corner of the heart, but apparently the lower self (*Nafs*) is satisfied with attaining its objective [of adopting seclusion while still becoming famous]. However, if one attains this certitude that people have no longer remained one's fans and admirers or they backbite one or ascribe bad things to one, then one's [inner] satisfaction of the lower self (*Nafs*) will end and one will be perturbed enough to look for ways of removing wrong thoughts about oneself from people's heart, even if one has to lie or resort to deception. It will be apparent in this case that this person has adopted seclusion as a showoff, in reality, one still has the love of fame and prestige in the heart. This love is like the love of wealth, but even more evil-engendering because the trial caused by fame is greater. As long as one has the greed [for admiration and awe] from people like oneself, one remains restless in making a place for oneself in their hearts. But if one earns with one's own hands and not keep an eye on someone else's wealth, then all people will lose their importance to one. One will no longer care about people's [thoughts in their] hearts who live far from one in the east or the west, because one can neither see them nor can have any greed [or expectation] from them.

Greed [and expectation] from people can be eradicated only through contentment. One who is contented, is oblivious towards the people and one who is oblivious, does not busy one's heart with people, and if there is admiration and rank for oneself in another heart, one does not give it much importance. Abandonment of fame-seeking is not possible without contentment and eradication of greed. Furthermore, one should keep in mind the situation of the pious predecessors (*Salaf Saliheen*) that they preferred humility over dignity and attained the Divine recompense of the Hereafter compared to worldly wealth.

Cure for Love of Praise

Many people had suffered because they were beset with fear of others and indulged in desire for their praise and admiration. [Consequently,] All of their movements and actions were according to people's wishes so that they would praise them. This matter is from the destructive traits and in that respect, its cure is obligatory. The method of cure is to deliberate on the reasons that give rise to the desire for praise and fear of condemnation.

First Reason [for the Love of Praise]: As mentioned before, admirer's statement [of praise] makes the admired realize that one has perfection. In this respect, one should resort to one's intellect, instead of believing the praise of the admirer, and should question it from one's heart whether the quality that is being attributed to one, is that really present or not? Then the quality that is being attributed to one, is that anything that really deserves to be praised like knowledge, God-fear, or is it something that should not even be praised like wealth, fame, and worldly goods? If a quality [that one is praised for] is related to worldly means, then being happy with that is like being pleased by looking at grass that will get dried up soon becoming stubbles that wind will carry around. This kind of happiness will be a mourning for the lack of intellect. It is not befitting for human beings to be pleased with worldly wealth and possessions. If one wants to be happy about that, then one should be happy for its existence and not for its praise by the admirer. That would mean that it came into existence after the praise, although one had it from before [but only became happy after someone praised it].

Furthermore, if that quality is such that you have the right to be happy about like knowledge and God-fear, it is not right to be happy about that even in that case because the final end of all [people in terms of one attaining eternal salvation and happiness or eternal sorrow and damnation] is unknown to all. One does not know if this [praiseworthy and noble] quality will stay or not. It is true that knowledge and abstinence [from worldliness] get one closer to God, but the danger of the end [of one's worldly existence] is present all the time. If one fears for bad end to one's life, then one will not be happy with anything from the world. Instead, one will understand that world is a place of sadness and sorrow and is not a place of happiness and satisfaction [due to its myriad issues]. If you are hopeful of a good end to your life, then instead of being happy on admirer's praise, one should be happy with the Divine largesse and blessings that has been bestowed upon you in the form of knowledge and abstinence [from worldliness] (*Zuhd*). It is because the pleasure is the result of realization of perfection and perfection [if it indeed exists,] owes its existence to Divine favors and not to the praise of the admirer. Praise is subservient to this Divine favor. That's why, one should not be happy about the praise because it will not increase your excellence. If someone praises your piety and abstinence from worldliness and you know that this praise has nothing to do with reality and if you get overjoyed by it then it is absolute foolishness. God is very well aware of the evil of your temperament and filth in your inner character and this is just a false praise and being happy with it is the height of ignorance. Even if the person praising is truthful, you should not be happy with the praise, instead you should be happy with the favors and blessings that God has bestowed upon you. False praise [of yourself] should be a source of sorrow and not of happiness for you.

Second Reason: Is that by means of praise, the conquest of the heart of person heaping praise becomes evident. Its objective is the same as that of the love of fame and the cure for the love of fame has been explained in the aforementioned that one should not have any greed from the people, and should be a seeker of rank and appreciation from God, and have certitude in this reality that seeking rank and appreciation from creations (all human beings) makes one remote from God. Hence, one should not be pleased with their praise.

Third Reason: Third reason for happiness is that by means of praise, the glory and dominant personality of the one being praised becomes evident. [In reality,] This is also a transient characteristic that has no permanence. It makes no sense to be pleased with such a fleeting thing. Such praise should be a reason of sorrow and considering the one praising as bad. One should be displeased with such praise as it brings one closer to hardships and catastrophes. One Gnostic said, "One who became happy with someone's praise, gave Satan an opportunity to enter into one's inner being". Another Gnostic was of the opinion that, "If you don't like to hear from someone's tongue that you are a bad person, but instead you like to hear that you are a good person, then in reality, you are not a good person". In a prophetic tradition, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

ألا لا تمادحوا وإذا رأيتم المادحين فاحثوا في وجوههم التراب

"Beware! Do not mutually praise each other and when you see those who praise then put dust on their faces (i.e., proverbially speaking, it means such people should not be given credibility and their praise should be disregarded and publicly rejected as it is harmful to one's spirituality in terms of boosting one's ego and self-righteousness)".

That is the reason why prophetic companions were very afraid of the praise and used to remain fearful of its turmoil (*Fitna* or catastrophic effects) and of the inner pleasure and satisfaction resulting from it. Upon hearing his praise, a prophetic companion said, "O God! This servant of Yours is desirous of drawing close to me with something that makes You displeased. I make You a witness that I am displeased with him". The very reason these [pious and righteous] people were antagonistic towards praise was because God is displeased with it. Furthermore, they used to have this perpetual realization in their hearts that God is aware of their [true inner] states [and their true reality] and is [completely] informed of their faults. That's why, someone's praise will neither result in reduction in one's own faults nor will they increase. Good person is the one who is close to God and bad is the one who is remote from Him. If the person who is being praised is bad in the sight of God and whose abode is Hell, then being pleased with someone's praise is extreme ignorance. If that person is deserving of Paradise, then one should only be happy on God's blessings and largesse as nothing is achieved by being pleased with the praise of other servants [of God]. One's affair is not in the hands of servants [of God, i.e., fellow humans]. Sustenance and death are all in the power and prerogative of God. If this point is understood, one will neither care for the praise nor of the condemnation from any creation. The love of praise will start to leave one's heart and one will get fully indulged with body and soul in the arduous expeditions of the spiritual path.

Cure for Abhorrence of Criticism and Condemnation

It has been mentioned before that human beings abhor condemnation due to a reason whose opposite reason is why they love praise. That's why, its cure can be understood from the cure of the love for praise. In this regard, the brief explanation is that the person who condemns you is not bereft of one of the three states. Either such person is truthful is one's statement or one's purpose is sincerity and love, or one is truthful in one's condemnation but one's objective is not sincerity and instead, wants to inflict harm. As far as the first case is concerned, you should neither be angry by listening to your condemnation nor have enmity towards one or condemn such a one in retaliation. Instead, it is better that you accept one's favor upon you because the person who informs you about your faults, in reality, makes you witness your own destructive inner qualities and advises you to safeguard yourself against them. You should be happy about one's criticism of you and should struggle to eliminate your own condemnable [inner traits or] qualities. Being remorseful on condemnation or disliking it or to call the condemning person as bad, is ignorance. If [it is the second case whereby] the criticizer criticized you merely out of enmity and to inflict harm on you, even then you should be happy because you became aware of your faults because of them. You were not previously aware of them, or it reminded you of your faults as you were negligent prior to that, or it made your [bad inner] qualities bad in your eyes as you considered them good prior to that. All these matters are causes of your eternal happiness and everlasting success (*Sa'ada*) and when you get the means to that then do not delay in attaining your eternal bliss and everlasting success. The similitude of this is that you wear clothes soiled with filth and intend to go to the court of a king and you are not aware that there is filth on your clothes. Furthermore, you don't even know this that if you enter in this state, king will be very angry, and it won't be a surprise if he punishes you with an exemplary punishment for this insult (breach of conduct). If [in this state] someone tells you, "O dirty! O filthy! Clean up your clothes", you should be happy as this verbal forewarning is highly valued. All evil and harmful morals, manners, character traits and inner dispositions are cause of destruction in the Hereafter. Humans come to know of their destructive morals, manners, character traits and inner dispositions through their enemies when they condemn and make you a target of their condemnation. If in your destiny, there is an enemy like that then you should value it. If any enemy is bent on one's enmity, it is dangerous for one's path to God [and standing with Him as someone's enmity could foster negativity within oneself] but it is [nevertheless] a blessing for you. You should be happy about this blessing [that you are made aware of your faults] and take advantage of it. What do you care if your enemy is bent upon, on one's own accord, getting burned to ashes (metaphorically speaking) in the fire of one's own enmity?

Third case is that the condemner is a liar and is accusing you of something that you are exonerated of with God. You should neither care a slightest bit about it nor should you condemn one back as a retaliatory measure, instead, you should pay attention to three things. First is that you are absolved of a fault that you are being declared to be

involved in. However, how many other faults like this are there that you are involved in, but God has cast a veil of concealment over them [out of pure Divine generosity and largesse]. You should be grateful to God that instead of informing people about them, one fault was handed over to them that you are absolved of. Second matter is that people's fault-finding will become an expiation for your own sins and faults. In other words, people attributing a fault that does not exist in you, absolved you of many others that you are actually involved in. Remember that anyone who backbites you, presents to you a gift of one's own righteous and good deeds to you [as backbiting results in the transfer of backbiter's good deeds to the account of the person who has been backbitten against] and one who praises you, strikes a fatal blow on your back. How strange this matter is that you are happy with the hurt on your back and are sorrowed with getting the gift of goods deeds, even though, these good deeds will get you closer to God. Third matter is that, that poor person is harming oneself by fault-finding against you. Such a person damaged one's faith, got oneself lowered in the sight of God, and became deserving of a painful punishment due to false accusations. Is it appropriate for you to be oppressive towards such an oppressed person who is already destined for a [befitting] reckoning [commensurate with one's evil deeds] and God's wrath is already upon such a person? Why do you give an opportunity to Satan to be happy by praying for one's destruction and Divine wrath? You should pray for such a one like this: "O God! Reform such a one, accept one's repentance and have mercy upon one". This was done by Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) when he made the following supplication for people who broke his teeth, injured his face and killed his uncle Hamza (May God be pleased with him) in the battle of Uhad [when Meccan armies came to attack and kill the Prophet and all of his followers in Medina and he was forced to defend the community]:

اَللّٰهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِقَوْمِيْ اَللّٰهُمَّ اِهْدِ قَوْمِيْ فَاِنَّهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ

"O God! Forgive my nation. O God! Guide my nation as they know not [the wrongs they have been committing out of ignorance]". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Bayhaqi Dala-il al-Nabuwwa*)

Condemnation does not seem bad to people who practice contentment and end all greed from the wealth of people. If you become oblivious to people [and what they possess including their praise and appreciation,] then no matter how much they badmouth against you, it will not have much impact on your heart. The reality of faith or path to God (*Deen*) is contentment that puts an end to the greed of wealth and fame. As long as greed remains, you will want that the person whom you have greed and expectations from, to have your love and high status in one's heart and to praise you. You would be busy making room in one's heart for yourself and that will not happen without destroying your faith or path to God (*Deen*).

Some people desire praise and fame and do everything possible to achieve them that they are able to, even to the extent of showing off in worship. In order to incline people's hearts towards themselves and to compel them to praise themselves, they do not even refrain from doing things that are religiously forbidden (*Haram*). Such people are on the path of [self] destruction. Some people are such that they use [religiously]

permissible things to seek fame and praise as they neither use worship as a means of that nor do they perform forbidden things. Such people are at the edge of an abyss. It is because a limit cannot be imposed on speech or on actions, that's why, it's possible that they may imperceptibly cross all limits in search for praise and end up destroying themselves. In this respect, they are very close to people who destroy themselves. Some people are such who neither desire appreciation nor do they strive for it, but when they are praised, they feel happiness in their hearts. If such people do not undergo a spiritual struggle and do not compel themselves to express abhorrence on praise, then it's possible that they may get included among the second group of people because of their inner joy [on being praised]. If they strive spiritually and express their abhorrence on praise and in consideration of its destructiveness, do not allow their hearts an opportunity to be pleased with it, then such people are surrounded by dangers of the spiritual strivings - sometimes they succeed and sometimes they are destined to defeat.

Some people are neither happy when they hear praise, nor they are pained by it as if praise does not leave its mark on them. Such people are valued even though they are not fully sincere. Some people are such that they express their aversion to praise but not to the extent that they become upset with the person praising or to prohibit one from doing so. The highest degree among these [various groups of people in terms of their response and attitude to praise] is that the praise should be considered bad, genuine aversion must be shown that should not be forced [in other words, outer disliking while one has inner satisfaction with it]. Being sincerely and truthfully upset with tongue while being pleased in the heart [with praise], is pure hypocrisy. Such an individual expresses one's sincerity and truthfulness but in the inner being, there is neither sincerity nor truthfulness. By means of these various degrees [of disliking praise], the differences in the states of those who condemn praise have also become evident. Its first degree is that there should be an expression of aversion and last degree is that one expresses happiness on condemnation [of oneself]. However, the only individual who can be happy with criticism of oneself is the one who has enmity with own's lower self (*Nafs*). This lower self is very rebellious, it has innumerable faults, its reneging of promises is famous, its deceits are clear. It deserves a treatment that is meted out to enemies. It is [a weakness in] human nature to be happy with listening to the faults of enemies. When one has become an enemy of one's own lower base self (*Nafs*) then one should be happy listening to its faults and should be grateful to the person who condemned it, as such a person has fulfilled one's communal obligation (*Fard al-Kifaya*) and employed shrewdness and intelligence to inform me of my own faults. This condemnation is valued as one will diminish in the eyes of people and will become protected from the harms of fame. Furthermore, human being is not able to do a lot of good deeds. It won't be a surprise if this condemnation [against oneself] becomes a good deed for one and becomes an expiation for one's faults that one is not capable to eradicate. If a spiritual traveler (*Mureed*) dedicates one's whole life to this work that praise and condemnation become equal in one's eyes, then this engagement will not allow one any reprieve or hiatus [for anything else]. In the path of eternal happiness and everlasting success (*Sa'ada*) of the spiritual traveler, there are a lot of treacherous and arduous canyons and this is one of those canyons. These canyons cannot be crossed without doing the most difficult spiritual strivings (*Mujahada*).

Chapter 9 - Harms of Ostentation and Showing Off

Ghazali's ninth book in the third volume or quarter of his *magnum opus* "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God" deals with harms of ostentation and showing off any good that one possesses in terms of material possessions or outstanding qualities, talents and skills. These ills are so self-consuming that they take hold of one's life and divert one from the spiritual path, outlined in the first part of this treatise, and rob one of inner peace and tranquility. Ghazali provides deep insights into these ills, their origins, and prescribes ways for eradicating them from the heart, consequently filling it with inner peace and tranquility. Like fame-seeking, ostentation promotes egoism and consequent arrogance it begets, along with obsession with the self (*Nafs*) and blindness to its shortcomings thus killing all possibilities of self-reformation and turning things around for the better. Ostentation removes sincerity in all matters, even in matters related to doing good things, thus emptying the heart of any light that is born in it as a result of one's good actions and deeds. Contents of this book by Ghazali are presented here in condensed form as follows [15]:

Condemnation of Ostentation

Ostentation [or showing off or pretentious display] is forbidden [in the Divine law] and one doing that is deserving of Divine displeasure. God says [while citing sincere servants who are devoid of empty pretensions and show off]:

إِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ ٱللَّهِ لَا نُرِيدُ مِنكُمْ جَزَآءً وَلَا شُكُورًا

"We serve you food only for the sake of God's countenance (metaphor for Divine acceptance, closeness and intimacy), neither desiring its recompense nor thanks [from anyone]." (Qur'an, Chapter 76, Verse 9)

فَمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا۟ لِقَآءَ رَبِّهِۦ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَٰلِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِۦٓ أَحَدًۢا

"Anyone who hopes to meet with one's Lord, should perform righteous deeds and not ascribe any partners in God's worship (doing anything for seeking the pleasure, approval and praise of creations is tantamount to including them in God's worship and bringing them to God's level)." (Qur'an, Chapter 18, Verse 110)

One man asked Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him): "O Messenger of God! Which action is salvific?" He responded: "A servant [of God] should not perform any actions in God's obedience whose objective is people [or anything they have to offer in terms of getting admiration, appreciation, thanks, praise, monetary or

material benefits, prestige, concessions, etc., from them]". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Hakim* on the authority of Abdullah bin Abbas [May God be pleased with him])

Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said: "When you fast on a day, apply [hair] oil to your head (scalp) and beard and pass over your greasy hand on your lips so that people will not notice that you are fasting [as dry lips is an indication of fasting]. When you give [in charity] with your right hand then give in such a way that your left hand is not [even] aware of it. When you pray, put a curtain on your door [so that no one notices that you are praying as the purpose of prayer is to worship God and not to make a public display out of it to earn people's admiration and praise]. God distributes praise as He distributes sustenance [to His creations including human beings]". Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

لا يقبل الله عزّ وجلّ عملا فيه مثقال ذرّة من رياء

"God does not accept a deed that has a particle's worth of show off in it".

It is stated in a prophetic narration that on the Day of Judgment, when there will not be any shade except for the Shade of God, among those who will find a place in the shade of the Divine Throne will be the one who had given in charity with right hand [in such a way] so that the left hand was not even aware of it. (Narrated by *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him]). According to another *Hadith* (prophetic narration), a secret [righteous] deed has seventy times more excellence than a [righteous] deed done publicly. (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Bayhaqi* on the authority of Abu Darda [May God be pleased with him]). Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said: "On the Day of Judgment, an ostentatious person will be called: 'Your [good] deeds have gone to waste and your Divine recompense has ended. Go and get the recompense for your deeds from those people for whom you performed them [in the first place]'". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Ibn Abi ad-Dunya* on the authority of Jabal al-Yahsabi [May God be pleased with him]). Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said: "God created earth, it then started to tremble and shake with everything on it. God then created mountains and made them as pegs on the land [to make it still]. Angels said to each other that God has not made anything harder than mountains. God then created iron that cut the mountains. Then He created fire that melted iron. Water was then commanded that extinguished the fire. Wind was then commanded, and it turned water upside down. The opinion of angels changed afterwards, and they thought about asking God. They asked: 'What is the hardest thing you have made in your creations?' He replied: 'I have not made anything harder than the heart of the son of Adam (i.e., human beings). When one gives in charity with the right hand, one keeps it concealed from one's left hand (i.e., it's done with complete secrecy to avoid all levels of ostentation and that requires a high level of sincerity to God that comes with a valiant striving for spiritual transformation)'". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Tirmidhi* on the authority of Anas [May God be pleased with him])

Abdullah bin Mubarak (May God's mercy be upon him) narrated from Khalid bin Ma'dan (May God's mercy be upon him) that he requested Mu'adh bin Jabal - a great prophetic

companion (May God be pleased with him) - to narrate to him a *Hadith* (a tradition of Prophet Muhammad [May the peace and blessings of God be upon him]) which he remembered and rehearsed daily on account of its difficulty and severity. Mu'adh (May God be pleased with him) agreed to do so but he wept for a long time. He then said:

"How ardently I long to meet with the Prophet (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)! Once I was with the Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him). He was riding a camel and he took me up to sit behind him. When we moved on, the Prophet looked up to the sky and said: 'All praise is for God Who commands His creatures as He deems fit'. Then turning to me, he said: 'I am telling you something, if you remember it, it will benefit you, but if you forget it then you will have no argument before Exalted God. O Mu'adh! Before creating the heavens, Exalted God created seven angels, one for every heaven and appointed one angel as a guard at each gate of the heavens, according to the dimensions of the gate. When the two [guardian] angels *'Kiraman Katibeen*' (two angels that are on two shoulders of every human being and record all of one's deeds whether good or bad) rise up with the deeds of the servants; there is light in them like the light of the sun. When they arrive at the [gate of the] first heaven, the angel standing as guard there asks '*Kiraman Katibeen*' (the guardian angels of every human being) to thrust the deed at the face of the servant [of God] (i.e., the human being whose actions are being taken to God). The angel says: I am the angel of 'Backbiting'. My Lord, God has commanded me that I should not allow the deed of a backbiter to go up.

The *'Kiraman Katibeen*' again rise up to the second heaven with some more deeds of the servant that shine like the sunshine. The angel stops them there and asks them to thrust the deed at the face of the servant, because one's intention by this deed was to earn worldly gains. [The angel tells them:] My God has commanded me not to admit the deed of a person who did them for someone other than God. The angels then send their '*La'na*' (Arabic word '*La'na*' means invoking God to withhold His mercy from His servant) on such a person till the evening.

Then the angels rise up with other [good] deeds of the servant like almsgiving, fasting and other good deeds which they consider to be very virtuous and valuable. But when they arrive at the third heaven, the guarding angel stops them and asks them to thrust the deeds at the face of the doer. The [guarding] angel says that he is the Angel of 'Pride'. He has been commanded by his Lord not to allow the deeds to go up, as the doer wanted, through the deeds, to display one's superiority over other people [out of pride and arrogance].

The *'Kiraman Katibeen*' again rise up with some more [good] deeds of this servant [of God] that shine brightly like stars. These include beautiful deeds like prayers, '*Hajj*' (or pilgrimage), '*Tasbeeh*' (remembrance and glorification of God), fasting, etc. When they reach the fourth heaven, the guarding angel stops them and asks them to thrust the deeds at the doer's face. The angel tells them: I am the angel of 'self-conceitedness' and have been commanded by my Lord not to let the deeds ascend higher [to God] as the doer adulterated one's deeds with self-conceitedness.

Then the angels embellish one's other righteous deeds like a bride that include '*Hajj*' (or pilgrimage), striving in the Path of God, etc., shining like the sun. They take them to the fifth heaven. The guarding angel [at the gates of fifth heaven] stops them saying: I am the angel of 'Jealousy'. The doer remains jealous of those whom God has, by His Mercy, granted them His bounties. This person is not pleased with God's generous grants [to one's fellow human beings]. My Lord has commanded me not to let one's deeds go up higher.

Then the angels go up to the sixth heaven with one's deeds like ablution, full purification, prayer, fasting, '*Hajj*' (or pilgrimage) etc. The guarding Angel posted there, stops them saying: I am the angel of 'Mercy'. Thrust the deeds at the face of the servant as this person has never shown mercy to anyone. One was pleased to see others in trouble and misfortune. My Lord has commanded me that I should not let one's deeds rise up higher [who is guilty of this offence].

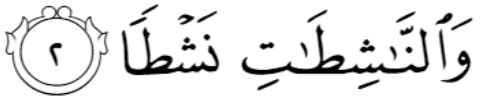
Thereafter, the *'Kiraman Katibeen*' rise up to the seventh heaven with some more deeds of this person including charity, prayer, fasting, striving in the Path of God, '*Taqwa*' (pious awe, reverence, and fear of God), etc. These deeds emanate out loud sounds like thunder clamp and lightening. The angel on the seventh heaven says: I am the angel of 'Fame and Show off'. This person has intended to earn fame through one's deeds of moving in the company and assemblies of '*Ulema*' (scholars) and people of position and dignity. My Lord has commanded me not to let the deeds of this person to go up higher.

Thus, a deed that has not been done purely for Exalted God is '*Riya*' (show off, ostentation, or deeds done to impress others) and He does not accept such deeds. Then the angels rise up with one's good deeds like prayers, fasting, '*Zakat*' (mandatory poor-due or charity), '*Hajj*' (pilgrimage), '*Umrah*' (mini pilgrimage), amicable character, silence, remembrance of God, etc. The angels of the seven heavens accompany them to see them off till they reach the Divine Court where all veils are removed, and they testify before God that the deeds of this servant are [done] exclusively for the sake of God.

At this moment, Exalted God shall say: You angels look after the deeds of servants [from the outside] but I look after their hearts. I know that by these deeds, one did not intend to seek My pleasure, nor did one do them exclusively for My sake. I know what one really intended by one's deeds. My '*La'na*' (deprivation from My Mercy) be on such a one, as one deceived you as well as the people. One could, however, not deceive Me because I know very well what the innermost recesses of the hearts conceal. None can remain hidden from Me nor escape My grip, no matter how hard one may try to be away from Me. I have full knowledge of what has happened in the past and what shall happen in the future. My knowledge encompasses all those who have passed away and those who are yet to come. I am fully aware of all the secrets with their full details. None can deceive Me by one's deeds. My servant may deceive the ignorant but cannot deceive Me, because I am the Knower of the unseen. I, therefore, send My '*La'na*'

(deprivation from My Mercy) on such a one. The seven [guarding] angels [who guard the gates of seven heavens] and the three thousand angels, all send their '*La'na*' (invoking God to deprive one of God's Mercy) on one. Then the inmates of the heavens say that on such a one be their '*La'na*' and of all of those who send their '*La'na*' on such deceiver'.

After hearing all these details, I (Mu'adh [May God be pleased with him] who was narrating from the Prophet) burst into tears and said: 'O Messenger of God! What is the way to get rid of this calamity?' Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said: 'O Mu'adh! Obey your prophet with full faith and conviction'. Mu'adh (May God be pleased with him) said: 'You are the Messenger of God and I am Mu'adh bin Jabal. How can I get salvation?' Prophet of God (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said: 'O Mu'adh! If your deeds are not up to the mark, protect your tongue from speaking ill of others and disgracing others, particularly your brethren and the '*Huffaz*' (those who have committed the entire Qur'an by heart). Do not meddle in the affairs of your brethren and other people. Let your own evil lower self (*Nafs*), refrain from dishonoring others. Do not praise your [own] self by speaking ill of your Muslim brethren. Never think of establishing your superiority by degrading others. Do not take resort to ostentation to earn fame. Do not busy yourself with the affairs of the world so keenly as to be totally neglectful of the affairs of the Hereafter. If someone is sitting with you, do not talk secretly [or whisper] to the third person. Do not express to others your superiority among the people, lest your deeds should be ruined in the world and in the Hereafter. Refrain in your assemblies from talking on topics of shamelessness (vulgarity) and lewdness, lest people should avoid you on account of your misbehavior. Do not injure, with your tongue, the honor of others lest the dogs of hell tear you to pieces. Almighty God has said in the Holy Qur'an:



And when they tear away the flesh from the bones.' (Qur'an, Chapter 79, Verse 2)

I then said: 'O Messenger of God! Who possesses the ability to act upon all these injunctions?' Prophet (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said: 'Action is easy for that servant for whom God provides ease. Dislike for others what you dislike for yourself [and like for others what you like for yourself. Actions done with utmost sincerity in this way will bring you your salvation]'". (Hafiz Iraqi, a great master of prophetic narrations [*Hadith*] who memorized hundred thousand prophetic narrations with their complete chain of transmissions, has done *Hadith* authentication of all *Hadiths* present in Ghazali's "*Ihya Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God" and has termed source reference of this prophetic tradition as "*Kitab az-Zuhd li Ibn al-Mubarak*" or "Book of Abstention from Base Desires by Ibn al-Mubarak" and "*Ibn al-Jawzi fi al-Maudu'aat*")

Khalid bin Ma'dan (May God have mercy upon him) said that Mu'adh (May God be pleased with him) did not recite the Holy Qur'an as much as he recited this *Hadith* (or prophetic narration). He frequently talked about this *Hadith* in his gatherings.

Traditions: It has been narrated that Umar (May God be pleased with him) saw a man bowing down his neck. He told him: "O you with [bowed] neck! Lift up your neck. Humility is not in the neck but is in the heart". Abu Umama al-Bahili (May God be pleased with him) upon seeing someone in a mosque in the state of prostration [to God as a gesture of slave hood, neediness and humility before God] said: "How good it would have been if you had done this in your home [where there was no one to see you do that and hence, you would have genuine sincerity before God]". Ali (May God be pleased with him) said: "There are three signs of a pretentious person - when one is alone, one becomes lazy; one becomes active after seeing people; when someone praises one, one does more [righteous] deeds, if someone bad mouths one, one reduces good deeds". One man asked Sa'eed ibn al-Musayyab (May God have mercy upon him): "One among us desires Divine recompense and appreciation [from people] after doing a good deed. Is one's action [such as this one] correct?" He asked him: "Do you want God's displeasure upon yourself?" The man responded in negative. He replied: "When you do whatever good deeds, do them [purely and exclusively] for the sake of God and remain sincere in it". Qatada (May God be pleased with him) said: "When a servant shows off then God says: 'Look at my servant! Such a one is joking with me!'" Ibrahim bin Adham (May God have mercy upon him) said: "Seeker of fame does not have complete faith in God".

Reality of Ostentation and Matters of its Occurrence

Ostentation means displaying good habits and endeavors, seeking appreciation and prestige in people's hearts by means of worship. In this respect, there are four things. One is the ostentatious person or the worshipper; second is the person who is being impressed, i.e., one for whom ostentation is done; third are the traits in which ostentation is done; fourth is the ostentation itself.

Things in which Ostentation is Done: An ostentatious person shows off in five things and seeks fame among people through them: Body, appearance, words, deeds, and followers and external objects. People immersed in worldliness seek fame and rank through these five things.

Ostentation with Body in One's Faith: The way of ostentation with body is that one adopts weakness and paleness on the body so that people may think that this person works extremely hard in religious matters and has the fear of the Hereafter dominant over one. Weakness argues for eating less and paleness argues for staying up at night for Divine worship. Similarly, disheveled hair argues for one's care and worry for the religion and that one is busy in worship all the time and hence has no time to even comb the hair. When these types of indications are seen [in public], people argue about one's holiness and this makes the lower self (*Nafs*) happy. Similar to these are keeping the voice low, having dark circles under the eyes, dryness of lips, etc. These indicate that this person fasts all the time, God's fear has caused the voice to become low or hunger is causing it. That's why, Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)

used to say, “When any of you fast, you should put [hair] oil on the hair, comb it, put antimony in eyes, and rub the lips with greasy hand so that people would not think of you as fasting [as dry lips indicate fasting]”. Similar advice is narrated from Prophetic companion Abu Hurairah (May God be pleased with him). These holy men guided people towards these methods to avoid the sin of ostentation. Satan targets worshipful servants [of God] by means of these very paths. Religious and spiritual people do ostentation through their bodies in this manner and worldly people do ostentation through healthy bodies, outer beauty, tallness, balanced organs, and beautiful skin.

Ostentation with Appearance and Dressing: Keeping hair disheveled, shaving [or trimming] moustache [as per religious injunction], walking with head down, moving slow [with poise and dignity], keeping the mark of prostrations on the forehead, wearing rough and coarse clothes, wearing a woolen robe, wearing long shirts that go all way to the ankles, keeping sleeves small, keeping clothes dirty and torn, all these actions are done for ostentation so that people think that one is a follower of the prophetic way (*Sunnah*) and of God’s righteous servants. This also includes wearing patched and blue clothes to resemble *Sufis* (spiritual travelers) even though one knows well that one does not know much from the realities of the spiritual path. Wrapping a shawl around a long shirt and having its edge hang over the eye is also included in ostentation because with this appearance, one will becomes a center of attention and people will look at one’s carefulness with admiration that one walks on the path by protecting eyes from the dust of the path. It is also ostentation that an ignoramus wears the dress of scholastic theologians (*Ulema*), adopt their appearance just so that people would think of one as a scholar and deal with one with respect and honor. The upshot is that, every group of people among them [that shows off with dress] does not become content with either less or more in what it considers its popularity and fame with, even though it may be permissible [in the Divine law]. This is the state of the religious [minded] people. The worldly people have ostentation through expensive clothes, good rides, fine shawls, shirts, gowns, and expensive goods. In other words, they wear ordinary clothes while at home but when they venture out of their homes, they wear fine clothes and go out with pomp and glitter so that people would think of them as rich.

Ostentation with Talk: People of religion or spiritual path have ostentation by adopting advising and sermonizing as their hobby. They fabricate things of wisdom and prudence, memorize traditions [of saints and religious people] so that they can be used in daily conversations so that the addressee confesses to their effusive knowledge and their pervasive attachment to the states and traditions of the pious predecessors (*Salaf Saliheen*). They do God’s remembrance in general gatherings and move their lips so that people may think that they are very pious and are busy in Divine worship at every moment. They exhort good (righteousness) and forbid evil and express their outrage over evil, express their immense pain on seeing people indulged in sin, greatly lower their voices when they talk, recite Qur’an in a touching and stirring way so their fear [of God] and sorrow would become evident, claim memorization of prophetic narrations and meeting with its scholars, knock at the doors of narrators of prophetic traditions and if someone narrates them, they find faults in it and immediately form an opinion about its authenticity or lack of it, so that people get impressed with their knowledge of this

domain, make long speeches to subjugate the opponent, and give references of Qur'an and prophetic traditions to express their knowledge. There are innumerable types of ostentation by means of talk for the religious people. Worldly people show off by memorizing poetry and examples, take special care of fluency and eloquence in words, memorize unique sentences and awe-inspiring words to impress affluent people, and express friendship to incline people's hearts towards themselves.

Ostentation with Actions: [Ostentation in actions happens in numerous ways, if done intentionally, such as] Standing in prayers for a long time by a praying person, lengthening of bowings and prostrations, bowing the neck, abandoning attention [to other things besides worship], displaying tranquility and dignity, keeping hand and feet together and actions like that which show humility and indulgence in prayers, etc. Performing these ostentatious actions can be in fasting, pilgrimage, mandatory charity (*Zakaat*) and strivings [both inner and outer] besides prayers. Similarly, the act of humility in walking and keeping the head down, tranquility and dignity in talk, and similar actions like them [can] have ostentation in them. This is to the extent that an ostentatious person quickly leaps forward for one's needs but when a religious person comes across, one changes one's speed and starts walking slowly, bowing down the head until chin touches the chest, picks up gradual steps so that people would not call one a hasty and undignified person. Therefore, when that [religious] person disappears from the sight, one starts to walk in haste again and when one sees someone, one becomes humble again. Such an individual does not adopt humility by remembering God but does so only to impress fellow humans, so that they will include one among pious servants of God. Some relatively careful people walk in solitude like the way they walk in front of others. They feel ashamed that their pace in public is contrary to the pace when they are alone so that they will not have a need to change their pace in front of others. They think that they would avoid ostentation by doing so but they don't realize that their ostentation will increase this way. [This is because,] Previously they were showing off just in front of people, now they are doing it even in private. The ostentation of the worldly people by means of actions is that they walk with pride puffed-up, move their hands constantly when they walk, and jumping their shoulders. They do this to show their prestige and grandeur.

Ostentation with Friends and Acquaintances: Desiring a scholar to come to meet with one so that people would say that this person is so important that such and such scholar or such and such worshipper knows one and comes to meet or one has a high status in religion, that's why people come and have the honor to meet with one. Some people are desirous of meeting with a king (state authority) or a high ranking royal (government) official so that the general public confesses to one's greatness in religion. Some people make copious mention of spiritual guides (*Shuyukh*) to prove that they have met with a lot of them and have received spiritual benefits from them. They express pride in their meetings with them and attaining spiritual benefits from them especially when there is a debate or there is a need to put down an opponent. At those occasions, people tend to make claims that they have seen such and such scholar, heard this from such and such scholar, travelled to such and such countries, and have benefited from serving so many spiritual guides and teachers.

These are the five things by which, the ostentatious people practice ostentation and the purpose of doing so is to gain honor and rank among [God's] creations. Some people become contented with good opinion of creations about themselves. Therefore, many monks go to their places of worship and do not come out for years. Many worshippers climb to the peaks of mountains and stay there for a long time and do not come down. Their disappearance is on this conviction that people hold a good opinion of them. If they come to know that people no longer have good opinion of them or some crime has been attributed to them then all of their inner peace gets destroyed, and they no longer remain contented with the good opinion about themselves that they relied on to adopt solitude. Furthermore, their inner perturbation does not end even after knowing that they are absolved [of the things that have been falsely ascribed to them] in front of God, instead, their inner tumult and sorrow is worth seeing. They would make thousands of excuses for the return of their prestige and rank in the hearts of people. Although they do not have greed for wealth, there is no escaping from the fame as this is a greater loss. Fame is the type of perfection that is achieved now, even though it is not long lasting but since most people are ignorant, innumerable seekers of fame are seen.

Many people are not satisfied with their rank in the hearts, instead they want tongues to also praise and honor them besides the hearts. Some people want that they receive fame in far off places so that people travel long distances to come and meet with them. Some desire fame with the kings so that their intercessions get accepted, their needs fulfilled, and they have honor and credibility in the general public. Some people want to earn and accumulate wealth by it, even though this may be the property of orphans, indigents, endowments (*Waqf*), or someone else's personal property. Of all the groups of ostentatious people, these [five] are the worst groups that practice ostentation by these five means.

Medicine for Ostentation and Curing the Heart with this Ailment

It has become clear by now that ostentation nullifies good deeds and makes an ostentatious person deserving of God's displeasure. It is a fatal disease, that's why, if someone gets this disease, medicine and cure is needed to remove it, no matter the amount of hardship borne to achieve it and the spiritual struggle needed to achieve it. The bitterness and acridity of the medicine is a guarantee for recovery. This is a spiritual struggle that is needed by every individual even though it may be a child. This is because a child is deprived of intellect and understanding and does what he or she sees people doing. When a child sees people doing affectation, pretension, and artificiality with each other, in his or her heart is born the love of affectation, pretension and artificiality [that are all part of ostentation] and envelopes all senses. The destructiveness of this habit is revealed when one attains intellect and discernment but by that time, this habit becomes so firmly ingrained that without an intense spiritual struggle (*Mujahada*) and extreme hardship, it is impossible to eradicate it. The upshot of this is that everyone is in need of this spiritual struggle. Initially there are hardships

but lately ease comes about. There are two ways of curing this disease. First is that its principles and causes that nurture the tree of ostentation are eradicated. Second is that the dangers (invasive thoughts) of ostentation are removed.

First Way of Cure - Eradication of Principles and Causes: This way [of curing the spiritual disease of ostentation] becomes practical when principles and causes [of ostentation] are known. In this respect, it should be remembered that the basis [and origin] of ostentation is the love of fame and prestige. If it is explained in detail, there are three bases of ostentation: First is the pleasure of praise, second is the hate of the sorrow one experiences from condemnation, third is greed for people's possessions. These things are causes of ostentation and they rejuvenate ostentation. Sometimes, one does not have the desire for praise but wants to avoid the sorrow of condemnation. For example, a miserly person gets trapped between some generous people who are spending increasing amounts of money in the path of God [such as the money spent in charitable endeavors]. Such a stingy individual would spend some money in charity so that one would not get termed as a miser. Such a one did not have the desire for praise but only desirous of avoiding the disrepute of miserliness. Another example would be of a coward who gets trapped between some brave people and wants to avoid being declared a coward without desiring to be called brave. Similarly, it is the individual who happens to be among some worshippers who stay up at nights to worship and performs a few cycles of prayers at night so that people would not call one lazy. Such a one is wary of condemnation and is not desirous of praise. Sometimes, one can be patient [in restraining oneself] with the pleasure of praise but cannot be patient with the pain of condemnation. Hence, one does not ask questions even if in need or issues a religious edict [*Fatwa*] without knowledge or claims knowledge of prophetic traditions [*Hadith*] even though one does not know anything, only to avoid condemnation [or criticism]. These are the matters that prompt an ostentatious person to indulge in ostentation.

The Specific Cure of Ostentation: It is an undeniable fact that human beings desire something only when they think of that as profitable and pleasurable, whether the profit or pleasure appears immediately or is expected later. However, if it comes to one's knowledge that the profit or pleasure of that thing is temporary and it will be harmful later then to end the desire for that thing or to avoid it, does not remain difficult. For example, one is familiar with the taste of honey but if it is revealed to one that it is mixed with poison, one will never use it. The easy way to obliterate desires and inclinations is to disregard temporary [ephemeral] benefits and keep in front [of one's eyes] its future harms. If it comes to the knowledge of a servant [of God, i.e., a human being] the harms of ostentation and one comes to know that an ostentatious person is devoid of the ability to do good deeds [that are the capital for everlasting eternal life] in the world, and one is deprived of God's closeness in the Hereafter, will receive a painful torment on the Day of Judgment, will be termed as deserving of God's displeasure, will be publicly humiliated by being called with the titles of "sinner" and "deceiver", and will be put to shame by saying, "Did you not feel ashamed of earning worldly wealth and possessions in exchange for God's obedience (worship)? You considered the servants [of God by doing things to impress them] and [in reality] joked with God's worship. You became a beloved of [God's] servants (i.e., fellow human beings) by becoming remote

from God. You embellished yourself for them and [consequently] soiled yourself with filth. You found their closeness by distancing yourself from God. You deemed insignificant the condemnation of God for the sake of [earning the] praise from the servants". When a servant [of God] thinks about this humiliation and compares the [ephemeral, short-lived] worldly benefits with losses in the Hereafter, one will not be inclined towards ostentation for the slightest bit. The loss of [righteous] deeds due to ostentation is not a small loss. It's not a surprise that a sincere deed, weighs heavily in the scale of good deeds but when it is admixed with ostentation, it gets included in sins and makes the scale of sins heavier. If ostentation causes the loss of only one worship, even then it is not a lesser harm. If suppose the scale of balance weighs heavily with good deeds, even then, one ostentatious act would not allow one to be included in the category of prophets, saints, and Gnostics irrespective of all other righteous deeds.

This was the explanation of loss in religion or path to God, the worldly loss is no less. The consideration of people's hearts [in terms of what they think] is in any case a cause of worries and anxieties. People's approval is a limit that is not easy to reach. If someone is pleased with an action of yours, there is someone else who is upset with you for the same action. Some people can be pleased by upsetting others. One who prefers the disapproval of creations over the disapproval of God (the Creator), God becomes displeased with one and makes others displeased with one. It is not understood then as to what is the benefit of praise from the creations? Why do people prefer the praise of servants [of God] over the disapproval of God, although their praise neither increases one's sustenance nor decreases it.

As far as greed in people's wealth and possessions is concerned, one should think that all hearts are conquered and subjugated by God. He has the power to incline any heart to give and stop any heart from giving. All creations are subservient to the power of God and sustenance is only in God's hand. One with greed for sustenance from the creation, does not remain protected from humiliation. Even if one achieves the objectives, one does not remain protected from the burden of favor. Rejecting God's proximity and Divinely bestowed honor for false hopes and empty thoughts, is foolishness. Furthermore, it is not necessary that one is able to achieve according to one's greed. Most of the time, one meets with failures. Even if one succeeds, the pleasure of success will not bring about a lot of happiness, compared to the pain of humiliation as a result of this favor that will be much more than that.

Fear of people's condemnation is also foolish. Is there an increase in loss due to their condemnation? What the Creator of destiny has written, is bound to happen. Condemnation will neither hasten the death nor delay the sustenance. If deserving of Paradise, one will not be disliked by God [due to people's condemnations]. If one is a beloved of God, then all human beings are incapable in front of Him as they can neither profit or harm nor do they have power over life or death, nor do they have power over life after death. If one ponders this way and heart and mind are directed towards this line of deliberation and contemplation, then there is no reason that heart will have any inclination left towards ostentation. That's why, an intelligent individual does not retain any inclination towards things that have more harm than benefit. This is also important

that if people come to know of the inner state of an ostentatious person that one loves to show off in the heart but expresses sincerity with the tongue, then they would start to hate such a person. God will someday open up this secret so that one will become detested in people's sight and they become aware of one's ostentation and humiliation before God. It is not the case that only one's ostentation becomes apparent to people, but one's sincerity also becomes apparent, and God owing to one's sincerity, makes one beloved among people, conquers their hearts for one, and grants power to their tongues to speak one's praises, although there is neither perfection in people's praise nor a fault in their condemnation [as they don't even matter in the overall scheme of things]. People's praise or condemnation is of no consequence.

One who perpetually keeps in one's consciousness the life of the Hereafter and never-ending bliss and lofty ranks to be achieved in that life, will consider insignificant, the blessings of worldly life that are admixed with hardships and turbidity, and will focus all of one's power of contemplation and action towards God. One will safeguard oneself from the humiliation of ostentation and inflicting pain to people's hearts. The reflection of illuminations of one's sincerity will cast on one's heart, that will cause its expansiveness. The expansiveness of the heart will open the door of subtle spiritual unveilings (*Mukashafa*) that will increase one's attachment to God and remoteness from creations. Detestation of worldliness and greatness of the Hereafter will increase [in one's heart] as no room in the heart will be left for creations. [Consequently] The motivation for ostentation will not even born in the heart and the path of sincerity will increasingly open up by itself.

Cure of Ostentation by Means of Actions

The practical cure of ostentation is to get into the habit of keeping acts of worship concealed and hide them as sins are kept concealed, until heart becomes contented with [only] God's knowledge and awareness of the worship, and one's lower self (*Nafs*) does not feel the need of knowledge and awareness of anyone other than God. According to a tradition, a companion of Abu Hafs al-Haddad (May God have mercy upon him) condemned worldliness (*Dunya*) and people of the world to which he replied, "You revealed something that you should have kept concealed. Do not sit with me after today". Ponder over this as Abu Hafs prohibited him from revealing a small thing because to claim the condemnation of worldliness, is a proclamation of one's own abstinence from worldliness (*Zuhd*) and of one's pious awe, reverence, and fear of God (*Taqwa*). There is no other medicine more effective and successful for the concealment of show off. In the initial phase of spiritual struggle (*Mujahada*), the act of keeping [worship] concealed is very difficult. But if patience is exercised for some duration and making that [concealment] a habit even with forcing oneself, the burden of this action will get nullified, and ease will come about, due to unceasing Divine favors, blessings, ability, and support. But here, one gets the fruits of efforts [in terms of actions]. Nothing is attained with lack of efforts. God says:

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا۟ مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ

"Verily, God does not change the state of a nation until people themselves change their own [inner] states [of their souls]." (Qur'an, Chapter 13, Verse 11)

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ ٱلْمُحْسِنِينَ

"Verily, God does not let the Divine recompense go to waste for those who excel in deeds of righteousness." (Qur'an, Chapter 9, Verse 120)

Second Method - Eradication of Dangers and Obstacles: In other words, eradicating those insinuations (*Waswaas*) and anxious thoughts (*Khawatir*) that come to the heart during worship and indulge one in other than God. The method of eradicating it, should be learned. Those people who struggle and fight against their own lower selves (*Nafs*), employing the actions of contentment, severance of greed, making oneself lowly in the eyes of creations, becoming oblivious to their praise and condemnation, they root out ostentation from their hearts. Satan does not stop following them during worship, instead, he makes them perturbed with the thoughts of ostentation. Their insinuative thoughts and desires from the lower self (*Nafs*) do not completely end, instead they [only] get subdued by means of spiritual struggle. When external factors re-energize them, they start to get revitalized. That's why, it is imperative to remove the dangers and causes of ostentation and to know its method.

Dangers of Ostentation: There are three dangers (the word "danger" here refers to invasive anxious thoughts) of ostentation. Sometimes all three appear at the same time and they [collectively] seem like one danger, sometimes they come gradually - initially the first one then the second then the third. First danger [sign of ostentation] is that one should desire that worshippers become informed [of one's worship] and to desire that one becomes aware that they are aware of one. After that, lower self becomes inclined towards people's praise, admiration, rank, and prestige [in their hearts]. After that, the lower self accepts and believes in this as a proof [of one's greatness due to people's praise and admiration]. First danger is termed "knowing", second is termed as "state" that can also be termed as "lust and inclination" and third is termed "determination and intention". Eradication of first danger (invasive anxious thought) requires more power (strength and effort) so that there is no possibility left of the advent of second danger. Therefore, if one's heart gets this thought of [the importance and need of] creations' knowledge and them being informed of that knowledge, one should remove it by asking oneself, "What do you even need from the creations? Whether they are aware of your worship or not, what impact does it have on [Divine] acceptance or non-acceptance of your worship? God knows [the reality of all matters], He is the one who has the power to accept or reject, what is the benefit of the awareness [of your worship] of other-than-God?" If the desire for praise is born in the heart, then one should eradicate this desire by reflecting on the harms of ostentation and should think that, "If I do not perform this act [of worship to God] with sincerity of the heart then I will be deserving of Divine displeasure and wrath on the Day of Judgment and will get deprived of [good righteous] deeds [that earn the Divine pleasure and acceptance] when they are needed the most".

Just like knowing that people being aware of our worship, engenders the inclination and lust of ostentation, similarly, mentioning the harms of ostentation engenders revulsion and detestation [towards pretentious acts of ostentation]. Inclination invites one to acceptance, and revulsion leads to refusal [of ostentation]. The lower self (*Nafs*) accepts that invitation which is stronger and dominant.

Eradication of Dangers of Ostentation: It is known from this that three matters are necessary for removing the dangers (invasive thoughts) of ostentation - knowledge, revulsion, and refusal. A servant [of God, i.e., a human being] starts worship with determination and sincerity, then the danger of ostentation occurs [in the heart] and one accepts it. At that time, one does not remember that knowledge and detestation [of ostentation] that was in the heart before. Harms of ostentation and understanding of ruining of the Hereafter that was present before, becomes subdued. Its parable is that of an individual who keeps the thought of forbearance in one's heart, considers anger as bad, and maintains this determination that if causes of anger appear, one will employ forbearance, but then some causes emerge that cause the fire of anger to flare up and thought of previous determination leaves the heart and harms of anger disappear from the sight. This is the exact same situation with the sweetness of lust. When heart is replete with its sweetness, the light of Gnosis gets hidden. Same is the state of all these lusts that get energized all of a sudden and the harm they cause to one's faith and spiritual path (*Iman*) is not remembered [at that time]. It is known from this that if Gnosis does not remain, repulsion [to evil] is not expressed because repulsion is born out of Gnosis and deep understanding.

Sometimes, a human being remembers and knows that the danger (dangerous and invasive anxious thought) that is born in one's heart is a danger of ostentation that leads to Divine displeasure. However, lust is so dominant over one that despite deep understanding, one insists on it, caprice and stubborn-headed folly (*Hawa*) from the lower self (*Nafs*), clouds out one's intellect, one is not able to leave the pleasure one gets, one makes excuses of making repentance [later after fully indulging in pleasures] to console the heart, or does things that do not give one an opportunity to ponder over the faults (harmful outcomes) of the pleasures. Some scholastic theologians or religious scholars (*Ulema*) do not utter a word that is devoid of ostentation and they are aware of it too, but despite that, they do not avoid it, instead they insist upon it. This insistence will be a tremendous proof [of misconduct] against them [on the Day of Judgment] because they practice ostentation despite knowing its destructiveness. Just knowledge and understanding are not enough but with that, abhorrence [of ostentation] is also necessary. Sometimes one possesses both the understanding and revulsion, despite that, one accepts the stimulants of ostentation and acts according to them because the revulsion [towards ostentation] is weak compared to the power of lust. Such revulsion is of no benefit because the whole point of revulsion is to desist from such acts. Benefit is only in the combined effect of three matters: understanding, revulsion and refusal. Refusal is the fruit (outcome) of revulsion and revulsion is a reaction of deep understanding. To the extent of the strength of illumination (inner light) of faith and knowledge, the Gnosis and spiritual illumination (*Ma'rifa*) [leading to the Divine Presence] will be strong. To the extent one possesses the love of the world

(worldliness) in the heart, one will have heedlessness of the Hereafter. To the extent one turns one's face away from Divine bounties and remains oblivious to the detriments of the worldly life, one will eschew the everlasting bounties of the eternal life [in the Hereafter] and to that extent, one's Gnosis and spiritual illumination (*Ma'rifa*) [leading to the Divine Presence] will be weak. This is a chain whose links are connected to each other. Some are fruits and outcomes of others. The origin of all of these is in the love of worldliness and domination of lusts. This is the very basis of every sin and mistake. It is because the pleasures of fame and rank and love of worldly bounties, rob the human heart and exterminate the power of inner illumination of faith. One is so engrossed in this pleasure that one is neither able to make Hereafter the subject of one's contemplation nor is one able to partake of the illuminations of the Divine book (*Qur'an*) and the prophetic way (*Sunnah*).

Signs of Truthfulness and Sincerity

As far as the question is concerned as to what are the signs of sincerity, truthfulness, and remoteness from ostentation in [religious] scholars and sermonizers and that they are not showing off with their knowledge and sermons? It should be known that there are a few signs of that. One sign is that if someone comes in front of one who gives a better sermon than one, is a better scholar than one, and is more popular in people than one, then one should be happy and not jealous, however, there is nothing wrong with awed admiration. Awed admiration is that one is desirous of similar knowledge for oneself. Another sign is that if distinguished people arrive in one's gathering then one does not change one's style of explanation but instead, one should keep speaking as before. All people should be equal in one's eyes. Another sign is that one does not have this desire from people that they walk behind one in marketplaces and pathways and follow one. Signs for knowing one's sincerity and ostentation are innumerable and enumerating them is difficult. These are some signs and indications through which the inner state of a servant [of God] is known. When you see [religious] scholars being jealous of each other and have enmity towards each other, then know that they have purchased the earthly life in exchange of the Hereafter.

Cure for Insinuations from Satan and the Lower Self: All these are insinuations from Satan and the lower self (*Nafs*). Their cure is to give a different direction to one's thoughts and contemplations in these situations and should think that if people become aware of one's hypocrisy and become aware of the state of one's conscious then how much would they hate one. When such is the state of the servants [of God, i.e., human beings] then what would be the state of God who is all aware and all knowledgeable and is aware of every single state of one's inner self? Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) has said:

تَعَوَّذُوا بِاللّٰهِ مِنْ خُشُوعِ النِّفَاقِ

"Seek God's refuge from the humility out of hypocrisy". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Bayhaqi* on the authority of Abu Bakr al-Siddiq [May God be pleased with him])

Humility [born] out of hypocrisy is that the bodily organs are trembling [in a pretentious display] but there is not a slightest effect in the heart [as it is devoid of any real humility]. This [prophetic admonition] is about seeking refuge from God's punishment and wrath and repenting because this act is sometimes caused by God-fear and remembrance of one's sins and regrets for doing that, and sometimes for the sake of ostentation. These different insinuative thoughts descend on the heart and they resemble each other. That's why, when such a thought descends on your heart, see why that thought or insinuation is there and where it originated from. If a thought has come from God, let it occur but be fearful as well because ostentation attacks so silently that often times one does not even realize. It is possible that the act (action or deed or endeavor, especially a righteous one seeking God's pleasure and approval) you have started with sincerity may have been soiled with ostentation. Hence, be fearful by thinking that God is aware of your each and every condition and each and every state. If your deed happens to get admixed with slightest amount of ostentation then you will become a subject of Divine wrath and displeasure [as God is not just an embodiment of Divine mercy, kindness, forgiveness and generosity but He also takes to task for one's willful transgressions, excesses, wrongdoings, oppressions and injurious behavior that is detrimental to individual and collective wellbeing, and that too out of Divine mercy and justice]. Ali bin al-Hussein (May God have mercy upon him) made this supplication [prayer to God]: "O God! I seek Your refuge from the matter where my outer is good in the eyes of people and when I am away from them in solitude, my inner being is bad before You. I [further seek Your refuge from the situation in which I] protect my deeds that are for showing off to people and destroy those deeds that are for Your sake alone and I come before You with worst deeds of mine, seeking closeness to people through righteous deeds and come before you with evil deeds and [consequently] attain Your wrath. O God! Protect me from this ostentation and hypocrisy".

These are the harms of ostentation. A servant [of God] should keep an eye on these harms and be familiar with them. According to a prophetic narration, there are seventy doors of ostentation and you have read that some of them are more subtle and discreet than others to the extent that some forms of ostentation are very discreet like the movement of an ant [on a dark black rock on a dark black night as per a prophetic narration] and some are even more discreet than the movement of an ant. How could someone perceive that? Continuous watchfulness and intense focus are needed for that. It is very difficult to be informed of the harms of ostentation without continuous scrutiny and examination of the lower self. May God protect us from these harms!

With respect to ostentation, there are so many insinuations (*Waswaas*) and deceptions from Satan that they cannot be encompassed in writing. There is no way of getting rid of these insinuations other than you removing everything from the heart other than God and all your life, do not like your self (*Nafs*) to get involved in Divine punishment. Instead, you should live like a king who has all worldly blessings and pleasures available to one but one does not enjoy them because one's body is beset with illnesses, and one is apprehensive at all times that indulging in these [earthly] pleasures will cause one's destruction. If [on the other hand,] one exercised prevention and

performed spiritual struggle against the lower self [to control its desires], then one will live for a long time and one's kingdom will last for a long time. With that in mind, one adopts the company of physicians and fragrance sellers and makes the lower self get accustomed to taking bitter medicines, even though the body will become weak due to shortage of food, but being disciplined about prevention and continuous use of medicine will grant one complete riddance of this illness that one is infected with. Even if lower self ever demands desires, all those illnesses whose final end is death, will come in front of one in embodied form. Whenever using bitter medicine is hard on one's self, one will definitely think about health that will be imparted to one as a result of that medicine and also the life that will be a life of comfort and prosperity in which body will be liberated from diseases and heart will be liberated from worries. This is also the state of a believer who desires the Hereafter and avoids everything that can cause the destruction of the Hereafter and what can be more destructive in the Hereafter than the worldly (earthly or carnal) pleasures and lusts. A believer avoids worldly pleasures and is contented with a little amount. One likes weakness, gloom, loneliness, sorrow, fear, and abandoning attachment to creations so that Divine wrath may not descend on one and destructiveness may not become one's destiny. Such a one expects to attain salvation by being oblivious to worldly (earthly or carnal) pleasures. This fear and expectation give one strength to have patience with avoiding worldly pleasures, and one knows that the wealth that will remain with one, is God's acceptance and approval (*Rida*). One then also knows that God is merciful and benevolent, and He helps those servants [of His] who act upon Divine injunctions and deals with them with mercy and love. If He wishes, He can make them oblivious to all sorrows and hardships but He [out of Divine wisdom and to propel them in the path of eternal happiness and everlasting success] tests [human beings with trials, tribulations and hardships] and with His Divine wisdom and justice, tests out their intent and truthfulness.

When human being adopts hardships [of the spiritual path leading one into the Divine Presence], one gets full help from God and that hardship becomes easy, strength of patience becomes available, and [Divine] obedience becomes a beloved act until one attains that one pleasure in entreating [God] and in acts of [Divine] obedience, that makes all other [earthly and carnal] pleasures look insignificant, and body attains that strength that obliterates all worldly pleasures. The Merciful One (God) does not let His seeker's hard work go in vain and does not let a beseecher go empty handed from His door. He says [according to a tradition of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)], "One who advances towards Me one hand span, I advance towards one an arm span. One who comes to Me walking, I go to one running". God said [according to another prophetic narration], "People are desirous of meeting with Me and I am more desirous of meeting with them". In the beginning, a servant [of God] should display truthfulness and sincerity in one's [spiritual] struggle, one will then see how much the Benevolent Lord will shower one with His proximity, love, and mercy.

Chapter 10 - Harms of Arrogance and Self-Conceitedness

Ghazali's tenth and last book in the third volume or quarter of his *magnum opus* "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God" deals with two of the most destructive of all spiritual diseases plaguing individuals, communities and entire nations – arrogance and self-conceitedness (or self-righteousness). Arrogance convinces one of one's own perceived false superiority over others thus creating a barrier between its possessor and those who are looked down upon due to their race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, ideology, material possessions, deformity, fault, disadvantage, and social status. Arrogance completely shuts down the door of any attempt to learn the perspective of another person or group of people being looked down upon, and it leads to hard feelings, enmities, open conflicts and resulting anarchy that destroys everything in the end. Self-righteousness or thinking highly of oneself as being right about everything, is another branch of arrogance that closes the door of search for the truth once and for all, consequently immersing one in a state of falsehood that becomes increasingly difficult to eradicate, after it envelopes the whole being. These ills of arrogance and self-righteousness are anathema to the sublime inner quality of humility that is needed to find the truth. Ghazali's masterful treatment of these negative propensities and their cure that brings forth the healthy state of humility, self-reformation, and turning one's life around for the better is presented in condensed form as follows [16]:

Arrogance (*Kibr*) and self-conceitedness (*'Ujub* or self-righteousness) are two fatal diseases [as they are destructive to the inner being and any spiritual aspirations one may have]. Arrogant and self-righteous individuals are sick patients who are adversaries of God and under His wrath. Since in this [third] volume [of the book "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God"], inner destructive character traits, qualities, dispositions and temperaments are being explained, that's why, it is imperative to shed light on arrogance and self-conceitedness. These two are counted among the worst destructive qualities [of the inner being and soul of a human being]. This book (one of the forty books of Ghazali's four-volume *magnum opus* "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God") is being divided into two chapters.

Harms of Arrogance

God says in Qur'an:

سَأَصْرِفُ عَنْ ءَايَٰتِيَ ٱلَّذِينَ يَتَكَبَّرُونَ فِي ٱلْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ ٱلْحَقِّ

"I will prevent, from the understanding of My verses (signs and truth), those who unjustifiably practice arrogance in the world (i.e., arrogance causes inner blindness and a severe mental block that prevents its practitioners from seeing the light of truth, and as a result of that, they get immersed in the utter darkness of falsehood that envelopes their entire being)." (Qur'an, Chapter 7, Verse 146)

كَذَٰلِكَ يَطْبَعُ ٱللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ قَلْبِ مُتَكَبِّرٍ جَبَّارٍ

"And in this way, God seals the heart of every arrogant and oppressor person [so that one's heart becomes incapable of perceiving the right path of guidance and truth]." (Qur'an, Chapter 40, Verse 35)

إِنَّهُۥ لَا يُحِبُّ ٱلْمُسْتَكْبِرِينَ

"Verily, [God] does not love the arrogant people." (Qur'an, Chapter 16, Verse 23)

لَقَدِ ٱسْتَكْبَرُوا۟ فِىٓ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَعَتَوْ عُتُوًّا كَبِيرًا

"These people are being arrogant in their hearts [by harboring thoughts of greatness and self-aggrandizement and looking down upon others] and have exceeded the bounds [of human decency and of God's limits that exhort people to shun arrogance and adopt humility]." (Qur'an, Chapter 25, Verse 21)

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

لَا يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ مَنْ كَانَ فِي قَلْبِهِ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِنْ خَرْدَلٍ مِنْ كِبْرٍ وَلَا يَدْخُلُ النَّارَ مَنْ كَانَ فِي قَلْبِهِ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِنْ خَرْدَلٍ مِنْ إِيمَانٍ

"That person will not enter into the Paradise who has even a mustard seed's size worth of arrogance in one's heart. That person will not enter into the Hell who has even a mustard seed's size worth of faith in one's heart". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Abdullah bin Mas'ud [May God be pleased with him])

لَا يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ بَخِيلٌ وَلَا جَبَّارٌ وَلَا سَيِّئُ الْمَلَكَةِ

"None will enter into the Paradise who is miserly, arrogant or one who mistreats one's subjects (those whose responsibility has been entrusted to one)".

"Worst servant [of God, i.e., a human being] is the one who unleashes cruelty and oppression and forgets the Most Powerful and Supreme Ruler (God); worst servant is the one who oppresses and is proud and forgets the Great Caretaker (God); worst servant is the one who remains indulged in negligence and useless time-wasting activities and forgets the reality of getting decomposed in the soil of the grave; worst servant is the one who crosses limits in rebellion, acrimony and enmity and forgets the beginning and the end [of human existence on earth]". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Tirmidhi* on the authority of Asma bint Ameesh [May God be pleased with her])

Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said, “Glad tidings is for the one whom God gave knowledge of His book and who remained protected from arrogance”. Muhammad ibn Hussein ibn Ali (May God have mercy upon him) said, “Proportional to the amount of arrogance in the heart, intellect gets reduced”. Someone asked Salman al-Farsi (May God be pleased with him) about an evil in whose presence no good, righteous deed is beneficial. He replied, “It’s arrogance”. Once a young man wearing nice clothes walked by Hasan (May God be pleased with him). He called that young man to come to him and said, “A man expresses pride on his youth and handsomeness, even though you should think that your body is as if the grave has concealed it and your deeds have come in front of you [which is the state after death]. Go and cure your heart. God only wants from His servants that their hearts get reformed”. According to a tradition, Mutraf ibn Abdullah al-Shakheer (May God have mercy upon him) saw Muhlub (a high-ranking government official) who was wearing silk clothes and walking with pride. He told him, “O Abu Abdullah! This walk displeases God and His Messenger”. Muhlub told him, “Perhaps you don’t know who I am”. He said, “Why not? I know [who you are]. In the beginning (in your origin), you were just a filthy drop of sperm and in your end, you will become a filthy [decomposing] carcass. And now [in between the two states of your beginning and end], you are walking around carrying filth [in your stomach. So, by knowing one’s reality, it does not behoove a human being to have anything but humility]”. Upon hearing that, Muhlub went away and left that [style of arrogant and proud] walk.

Excellence of Humility

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

مَا زَادَ اللّٰهُ عَبْدًا بِعَفْوٍ إِلَّا عِزًّا وَمَا تَوَاضَعَ أَحَدٌ لِلّٰهِ إِلَّا رَفَعَهُ اللّٰهُ

“God increases the dignity and honor of a servant because of one’s forgiveness. One who adopts humility for the sake of God, God elevates such a one to higher [spiritual] ranks”. (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him])

مَنْ تَوَاضَعَ لِلّٰهِ رَفَعَهُ اللّٰهُ وَمَنْ تَكَبَّرَ وَضَعَهُ اللّٰهُ وَمَنِ اقْتَصَدَ أَغْنَاهُ اللّٰهُ وَمَنْ بَذَّرَ أَفْقَرَهُ اللّٰهُ وَمَنْ أَكْثَرَ ذِكْرَ اللّٰهِ أَحَبَّهُ اللّٰهُ

“One who adopts humility for the sake of God, God raises one to high ranks and one who is being arrogant, God brings one down [by means of humbling experiences] and one who is being a spendthrift, God makes such a one pauper, and one who remembers God a lot, God makes one His beloved”. (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Bazzar* on the authority of Talha ibn Yahya [May God be pleased with him])

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said, “I was given a choice [by God] to be either a slave [of God] and prophet or a king and prophet. I did not know what to choose. From among the angels, [Archangel] Gabriel is my friend (as the Prophet was frequently visited by Gabriel who was the primary means of the Divine

revelation of Qur'an that spanned 23 years) and I looked at him. He told me, 'Adopt humility for the sake of your Lord'. I then said, 'I like to be a slave [of God] and prophet (slave hood to God is the epitome of spirituality and the rank of slave hood is the highest rank before God that is achieved through humility embodied in slave hood)'". (Narrated by *Hadith* collections *Abu Ya'la* on the authority of Aisha [May God be pleased with her] and *Tabarani* on the authority of Abdullah ibn Abbas [May God be pleased with him])) God revealed a Divine revelation to Prophet Moses (Peace and blessings of God be upon him), "I only accept the prayers of a person who is bowed down before My greatness, who does not adopt superiority over My servants, have My fear in one's heart, spends one's day in My remembrance, and refrains from the desires of the lower self for My sake". Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

اَلْكَرَمُ التَّقْوىٰ وَالشَّرَفُ التَّوَاضُعُ وَالْيَقِيْنُ الْغِنٰى

"Nobility [and sublimity] is in having pious awe, reverence and fear of God (*Taqwa*), honor is in humility (*Tawadu*), and wealth is in certitude (*Yaqeen*) [in God and Divine eternal verities]". (Narrated by *Hadith* collections *Ibn Abi al-Dunya* and *Hakim* on the authority of Sumrah [May God be pleased with him])

Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said, "Glad tidings are for the humble ones as they will sit on pulpits on the Day of Judgment, glad tidings are for the brokers of peace among people as they will be the inheritors of Paradise on the Day of Judgment, glad tidings are for those who keep their hearts cleansed of all the worldly filths as they will attain to God's vision on the Day of Judgment". According to a prophetic narration, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said, "There are four things that are attained by only those people whom God has them as His friends: First is silence that is the beginning of worship, second is trust in God, third is humility, and fourth is unattachment to the world (earthly delights, pleasures and entanglements)". (Narrated by *Hadith* collections *Tabarani* and *Hakim* on the authority of Anas [May God be pleased with him])

Aisha (May God be pleased with her) said, "You people are negligent of the most excellent worship [which is] humility". Yusuf ibn Asbaat (May God have mercy upon him) said, "A small amount of God-fear is sufficient for one compared to [performing] a lot of righteous deeds, and a small amount of humility is sufficient for one compared to a lot of spiritual struggle". Someone asked Fudhail ibn Ayadh (May God have mercy upon him) about humility to which he replied, "Humility is that you remain bowed down in front of the truth, and be subservient and obedient to the truth to the extent, that even if you find truth from a child, you accept it and if you even hear it from an ignoramus, you accept it". Abdullah ibn Mubarak (May God have mercy upon him) said, "Real humility is that you prefer the one over yourself who is less [fortunate] compared to you in worldly blessings until such a one gets this certitude that you have no superiority over one because of the world (worldly means, status and power). [Furthermore,] Humility is that you consider yourself worse than the one who has more than you in worldly blessings until such a one understands that one has no superiority due to worldly means".

According to a tradition, a Divine revelation to Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said, “When I send a blessing on you then accept it with humility, I will complete that blessing on you”. Ka’ab (May God be pleased with him) said, “If an individual received a [Divinely bestowed] blessing and expressed gratitude to God for that and lived as a humble individual, God will bestow the profits of that blessing in this world and will also raise up the ranks in the Hereafter. And if an individual received a [Divinely bestowed] blessing, but did not have gratitude [to God] but instead, expressed superiority over people [on that basis], such a person will remain deprived of the profits (benefits) of that blessing and will be faced with punishment in the Hereafter”. Prophet Solomon (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) had a routine that every morning he used to have a cursory meeting with the wealthy and elites, and once done with them, he used to come and sit in the gathering of the poor and used to say, “A poor indigent can only spend one’s life with the poor indigents [due to my poverty and neediness to God despite the vastness of my earthly kingdom that has no comparison with God’s dominion]”. Ziyad Nameiri said, “An abstinent [from worldliness] person without humility is like a tree without fruits”.

The reason arrogant people’s entry into Paradise will be banned because good morals, manners, character, inner disposition and qualities (*Ikhlaq*) are the doors of [entry into the] Paradise that get shut due to arrogance and [undue] self-respect (pride). A servant [of God] remains deprived of illumined morals, manners, character, inner disposition, and qualities due to arrogance, [such a one is] especially [deprived of] humility which is the capital and fountain of life for the God-fearing and is the basis of their [sublime] character traits. One remains deprived of other good morals, manners, character, inner disposition, and qualities besides humility [as a result of arrogance]. For example, one will not be able to abandon enmity along with [possessing] arrogance, will not be able to pay attention to anyone’s advice, will not be able to have sincerity with anyone, will not be able to avoid humiliating and degrading people, will not be able to protect oneself from backbiting and fault-finding. In fact, all good morals, manners, character, inner disposition, and qualities will come to an end and bad morals, manners, character, inner disposition, and qualities will be born. There are no bad morals, manners, character, inner disposition and qualities that do not exist in arrogant people, instead, an arrogant person is compelled to take support from every evil and every bad character trait because without doing that, one is incapable of maintaining one’s false self-respect [and misplaced pride]. There is not a single good quality that an arrogant individual is not deprived of because such a one considers (believes) that good morals, manners, character, inner disposition and qualities will deprive one of that [mistaken perceived sense of dignity and] respect. This is the reason for the inability of an arrogant person to get into Paradise that many bad and evil morals, manners, character, inner disposition, and qualities are imperative with arrogance. Along with that, one evil quality is a harbinger of many other evil qualities and character traits.

Worst type of arrogance is the one that prevents one from benefiting from knowledge [especially of eternal verities] and is an impediment in accepting the truth and deprives

one of following the truth. There are many [sacred] verses [from Quran] about this kind of arrogance:

وَٱلْمَلَٰٓئِكَةُ بَاسِطُوٓاْ أَيْدِيهِمْ أَخْرِجُوٓاْ أَنفُسَكُمُ ۖ ٱلْيَوْمَ
تُجْزَوْنَ عَذَابَ ٱلْهُونِ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَقُولُونَ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ غَيْرَ ٱلْحَقِّ
وَكُنتُمْ عَنْ ءَايَٰتِهِۦ تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ

"[At the time of death of arrogant folks] Angels would be advancing their hands [towards them saying], 'Take your souls out! Today you will be given humiliating punishment because you used to speak lies about God and you used to have arrogance towards God's verses.'" (Qur'an, Chapter 6, Verse 93)

سَأَصْرِفُ عَنْ ءَايَٰتِىَ ٱلَّذِينَ يَتَكَبَّرُونَ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ ٱلْحَقِّ

"I will keep such people away from true understanding of My verses (Qur'an) who unjustifiably practice arrogance on earth [as arrogance seals the heart that becomes incapable of understanding Divine guidance and perceiving the truth]." (Qur'an, Chapter 7, Verse 146)

Scholars of Quranic exegesis have written that it means that the understanding of Qur'an will be lifted from the hearts. In some exegesis it is written that it means that hearts will be stopped from witnessing the heavenly dominion. Ibn Jareeh (May God have mercy upon him) said that they will not be able to ponder and contemplate over the verses and derive lessons from them. That's why, Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) used to say, "Cultivation is planted on soft earth and not on rocks. Similarly, wisdom impacts humble hearts. Arrogant hearts do not get the slightest impact from it". Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) has termed arrogance to be necessarily linked with the rejection of truth and said:

اَلْكِبْرُ مَنْ سَفِهَ الْحَقَّ وَغَمَصَ النَّاسَ

"Arrogant is the one who rejects the truth and finds faults with people". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Abdullah ibn Mas'ud [May God be pleased with him])

Things with which Arrogance is Exhibited

Only that person is arrogant who thinks highly of oneself and the one who thinks highly of oneself is a claimant of one of the qualities from the qualities of perfection. Then this perfection is both worldly and religious. Qualities of perfection related to religion are knowledge and actions. Worldly qualities of perfection are lineage, beauty, power,

wealth, and abundance of supporters. These are then seven types and causes of arrogance:

First Cause of Arrogance - Knowledge: First cause of arrogance is knowledge. Scholars (scholastic theologians) get involved in arrogance quickly. At first, a scholar realizes the perfection and beauty of one's knowledge in the heart. Then one considers oneself superior and others as inferior. One does not think of others as worthy and look at them like cattle. One considers them as ignorant and expects that they will be first to greet one. If by any chance, one takes lead in greeting others or responds to their greetings and salutations in a nice way or gets up to greet them or accept their invitation, one considers this as a favor one is doing on them and thinks that one has honored others through this [good] treatment, even though they were not worthy of it, that's why, it is necessary that they serve one because of one's favor on them. Arrogant scholars have this habit that people go to them to meet with them, but they don't go to anyone to meet, people come to visit them when they are sick, but they don't visit anyone who is sick. They do not have a good attitude even with people who are close to them. They make them serve them and do not forgive their mistakes. They consider it their favor to educate people and consider that since they have imparted them knowledge, it is their right that they serve them. Such is their practice in worldly matters, the corruption of their temperament is at its peak in matters related to the Hereafter. These so-called "scholars" think that knowledge has raised them to a high rank before God, so now they should be fearless of any Divine retribution and accountability. They are not fearful for themselves [about their own standing before God] but they are fearful for the laymen. They do not have any worry about their own reformation, but they are perturbed about the reformation of the laymen. Such people are not scholars, rather they are ignorant. What do they have to do with knowledge? Real knowledge is by means of which one recognizes God, attains a deep spiritual insight of one's lower self, perceives the dangers of one's [inevitable] end, and have this belief that God's intense accountability will be with the scholars. Real knowledge increases God-fear, humility, and submissiveness to God even more. One who attains this knowledge [out of Divine largesse and favor], never thinks of one's lower self (*Nafs*) as superior but considers everyone as superior to oneself because one will be subjected to more questioning than others. Knowledge is a tremendous blessing and people of knowledge are not able to express gratitude [to God] for it. Abu Darda (May God be pleased with him) used to say, "One who has more knowledge, has more pain [of not being able to sufficiently thank God for His tremendous favors and blessings]".

A reason why knowledge becomes a source of arrogance is [to look into the motive of] why a servant [of God, i.e., a human being] starts acquiring knowledge; [in this case,] one's inner being has been a center of [inner] evil and the lower base self (*Nafs*) an abode of filth, and one has bad morals, manners, character and inner disposition (*Ikhlaq*). Before setting foot in the valley of knowledge, it was imperative for one to have undergone different spiritual struggles to civilize the lower self (*Nafs*) and to purify the heart and the soul, and should have trained the lower self to worship its Lord. For a situation like this [in which one is in dire need of civilizing the heart and the soul as necessary first step], knowledge cannot possibly be beneficial because actions do not

have a dignified place in the heart. It (knowledge) is forced to live among the filth, neither its fruits can be beneficial, nor can there be signs of good, looking prominent on them. Wahab ibn Munabbeh (May God have mercy upon him) has given its best example. He said, "Knowledge is like water from the clouds which is intrinsically pure, clean and sweet. Trees absorb it in their veins and convert it into the way they are. If a tree's leaves and fruits are bitter, the taste of water also becomes bitter and if they are sweet, the taste of water also remains sweet, rather, it becomes sweeter. Same is the state of knowledge - people absorb it and drink it draught by draught and make it just like their intention and determination as they desire. An arrogant becomes more arrogant, a humble becomes humbler. One whose intention was to have arrogance and was ignorant then gained knowledge and now one has achieved what could become a source of arrogance. Hence, for such a one, arrogance increased even more. Similarly, one who had fear [of God] then acquired knowledge then this fear, intense apprehension about Divine actions, humbleness and humility increased even more because knowledge ascertained the fear [of God]". The upshot is that this is one of the greatest causes of arrogance.

Second Cause of Arrogance – Pious Deeds and Divine Worship: Worship and [pious] deeds are the second cause of arrogance. An abstinent [from worldliness] and worshipful person is also not devoid of evils like seeking honor, fame, arrogance, and inclining people's hearts towards oneself. They also express these evils in both worldly and religious matters. In the worldly matters, [they express it] in this way that they consider people coming to visit them as better than their visit to them. They also want that people fulfill their needs, respect them, make room for them in gatherings, mention them with the qualities of scrupulousness and God-fear, and give them preference in all matters. This is as if they consider their worship [to God] and spiritual struggle as a favor on creations. In religious matters, their state is such that they consider everyone as wretched except themselves, although they themselves are wretched because they are the ones who have this fallacy. To claim people's wretchedness is a reflection of their abasement. Not only has this person abased people with one's words, but one is also proud with God and is fearless of God's punishment and Majesty. How tremendous is the difference between a worshipper who worships considering it a favor and degrades the creations, and the person who loves the creations due to their worship and obedience and respects them, and expects for them ranks before God that one does not expect for oneself.

According to a tradition. there were two men in the Children of Israel. One of them due to his tumultuous nature and evil actions, became famous as rebellious and second man became famous as a worshipper due to his profuse worship. He had done so much worship and had such a high rank before God that a cloud always shaded him. The rebellious man thought, "I am very ill-reputed, and this worshipper is a very God-fearing and worshipful human being. If I sit near him then it is possible that God would descend His Mercy upon me". The worshipper thought, "I am a worshipper. How can this bad man sit close to me"? Therefore, when rebellious man wanted to sit close to the worshipper, he expressed his hate for him and did not allow him to sit close to him. God sent a Divine revelation to the Prophet of that time [who was also from the Children

of Israel] to tell both of them to re-start doing pious deeds all over again as He has forgiven all the sins of the rebellious man and have nullified all the [pious] deeds of the worshipper. After this, the cloud started to shade the [previously] rebellious man.

It is known from this incident that God is seeking the hearts of His servants. If an ignorant sinning individual starts to stay humble and bowed down to God's Majesty out of God-fear, then it's an indication that one has obeyed God from the heart. Instead, one is being a greater worshipper than an arrogant religious scholar and a proud worshipper. There is another harm that a very few worshippers and abstinent [from worldliness] people save themselves from and that is if someone looks at them with contempt or hurts them, they consider it an unforgiveable crime. They think that the person doing that will not be forgiven by God and has become worthy of God's wrath. If the same treatment gets meted out to someone else, they do not have this disapproving reaction. It is because they are claimants of their high status and rank, although this claim is based solely on ignorance. Some people's foolishness compels them into making claims like "Such and such will have a bad ending" or "Such and such will get punished for that", etc. If by any chance, the offender gets sick with a fatal disease, one thinks of it as one's miracle and says that God has taken one's revenge. One does not see that unbelievers have cursed God and His messengers and have even harmed the prophets [of God] and even killed them. Despite that, God gave respite for most of these offenders and did not give them any punishment in the world. Instead, many of them were [Divinely] guided to the truth and they neither received punishment in the world nor will they get any punishment in the Hereafter. Does this ignorant, arrogant, self-deceiving worshipper thinks that one has such high rank before God that He took revenge for one while this was not done even for the prophets? Perhaps, one does not even know that one is disapproved by God due to this arrogance and self-righteousness and is unaware of one's own [spiritual] destruction. This belief is of those arrogant people who are deprived of intellect. How great is the difference between two people? One person has pious awe, reverence and fear of God both in one's inner and outer being and is apprehensive of one's lower self [due to its negative and injurious propensities], considers one's [righteous] deeds as insignificant [out of humility], and is constantly busy with the struggle to reform it. A second person has hidden the filths of ostentation, arrogance, jealousy, and deception thus becoming a toy for Satan and on top of that, thinks that one is doing a favor on God by means of one's [righteous] actions. This is a fact that any individual who harbors the belief that one is superior to any servant of God, such a one has wasted one's entire capital of [good, righteous, and noble] endeavors due to this ignorance. Ignorance is the worst sin and there is nothing greater that casts one far away from God. Making a decision about oneself that one is better than others, is merely foolishness and ignorance and is an indication of fearlessness from God's accountability, even though God has said:

فَلَا يَأْمَنُ مَكْرَ ٱللَّهِ إِلَّا ٱلْقَوْمُ ٱلْخَٰسِرُونَ

"No one is fearless of God's devising and strategizing (*Makr*) except for the group of people who are on the verge of a stunning loss." (Qur'an, Chapter 7, Verse 99)

In short, arrogance is such a calamity that only those servants of God stay safe with whom God protects in His care, otherwise, people are commonly beset with this calamity.

Third Cause of Arrogance – Lineage (Race, Ethnicity, Nation, Tribe, Community): A person who possesses a higher lineage [in terms of coming from a good, respectable, prominent, and well-known family], looks down upon those people who are deprived of this higher lineage [in terms of having humble family origins] even though, they may be better than one in knowledge and righteous deeds. [This discussion applies to all forms of racial, ethnic, religious, sectarian, tribal, community, linguistic, political, ideological, and nationalistic pride, arrogance, superiority complexes and resulting hatred or looking down at people who don't share these characteristics and considering them inferior. A true servant and intimate of God, is the one who has no color of one's own, instead, one adopts the color of God by being imbued with Divine qualities, represented by multitudes of Divine names, such as the Divine qualities of love, compassion, mercy, justice, equality, sincerity, altruism, selfless service, benefiting others, considering people's sufferings as one's own, etc.]. Sometimes the state of arrogance of this person is such that one thinks of those with humble origins and backgrounds as slaves and servants and finds it repugnant to mingle, eat and drink with them. One expresses pride on one's lineage by calling others with offensive names or says, "Who are you?", "What was your father?", "I am the child or grandchild of such and such [great person]. How can an insignificant person like you, talk to me or even look at me?" Every possessor of lineal pride has this secret nerve in the lower base self [that manifests itself in subtle or blatant ways] but when the fire of anger rages, the frozen blood of this nerve melts, the illumination of inner light extinguishes then one starts to talk [in a degrading and demeaning way] with references to one's lineage and genealogy. This [demeaning and degrading behavior] cannot even be imagined from a humble slave [of God]. It was narrated by Abu Dharr (May God be pleased with him) who said: "While Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) was present [near me], I happened to have an argument with a man and in my anger I called him 'son of a black woman'. [Upon hearing this from me] Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) addressed me and said:

طَفِ الصَّاعَ طَفِ الصَّاعَ لَيْسَ لِابْنِ الْبَيْضَاءِ عَلَى ابْنِ السَّوْدَاءِ فَضْلٌ

'Both scales [of balance] are equal. The son of a white has no superiority over the son of a black [as all human beings are equal in the sight of God and hence, it does not behoove one to express racial pride and arrogance]'.

Upon hearing this from the Prophet, I laid on the ground and asked that man to stand up and step on my cheek [to eradicate my racial pride and arrogance that came out in that situation of conflict and I turned to God repentant and expiated for this sin by making amends with the man I offended in this manner]". (Narrated by *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim* and *Musnad Ahmed*)

See how Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) informed Abu Dharr about this wrong of his as he was considering his whiteness as a cause of his

superiority. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) telling him that in Islam both white and black are equal [as no one has any superiority over another on the basis of race and skin color], informed him that even having a thought or imagination like this is a sin and ignorance. Also see how much of an immediate effect this warning of the Prophet had on Abu Dharr (May God be pleased with him - a prophetic companion who was under the spiritual watch and training of the prophet and was learning and reforming himself as a result of that training) that right at that moment, he became ashamed of his mistake, [immediately] repented, and removed from the roots that tree called "arrogance" from the surface of his heart by means of the soles of the feet of the man [he wronged]. He learned it right at that moment that eradication of honor (pride and arrogance in this case) is [attained] only by means of humiliation. According to a similar tradition, two people expressed pride in front of the Prophet. One of the them said to the other, "I am so and so, son of so and so. May your mom perish, who are you?" Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said: "Two men expressed pride in front of Prophet Moses (Peace and blessings of God be upon him). One of them said, 'I am so and so, son of so and so' until he counted the names of his nine ancestors. God sent a revelation to Prophet Moses (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) that those nine ancestors [of yours] are denizens of Hell and you are the tenth denizen [so the arrogance of yours and your ancestors have landed you all in the worst place to be]". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Musnad Ahmed*)

Fourth Cause of Arrogance – Beauty and Looks: Arrogance by means of beauty is usually done by [but not restricted to] women and it compels them to express faults of other women and backbite against them. Therefore, Aisha (May God be pleased with her - wife of the Prophet) narrates, "A woman came to visit Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) [for spiritual advice]. After she left, I gestured with my hand about how short she was. Prophet told me: 'You have backbitten against her'". The purpose of her criticism was secret arrogance [hidden and latent in her heart that she herself didn't realize] because if she herself had been short, she would not have called the other woman as short. This is as if she liked her height and considering other woman as short, called her a "dwarf". [Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) did not desist from instantly correcting this negative thought in his beloved wife, who also immediately understood this folly, and removed this wrong idea from her heart, and also reported this prophetic teaching honestly at her own expense for the reformation of people for all times to come, for their own spiritual uplift, reformation, and transformation].

Fifth Cause of Arrogance – Wealth: This arrogance is done by kings due to their treasures, business people in their business goods and assets, farmers in their farmlands, and well-to-do in their dresses and rides. A wealthy considers poor as lowly and is arrogant towards them and tells them, "You are beggars, paupers and needy. If I want, I can purchase the likes of you and make you my servant. Who are you and what do you even have? I have more goods in my house than what you ever had. I spend so much in a day that you cannot spend in a year". The wealthy says all these things because this person has tremendous importance and greatness for wealth in one's eyes

and dislikes poverty, although it means that one is not aware of the excellence of poverty and harms of wealth. If one had been aware, one would not have talked like that.

Sixth Cause of Arrogance – Power: This arrogance is done by a powerful person over a weak one. [This power that is a basis of arrogance, can be physical, political, material, spiritual, and intellectual powers, and is equally reprehensible in the Divine Law].

Seventh Cause of Arrogance – Abundance of Helpers, Supporters, Admirers and Relatives: Some people have arrogance because of large number of students, helpers, relatives, followers, supporters, and admirers. Kings have arrogance due to the size of their armies and teachers due to the abundance of their students.

The crux of all this discussion is that the cause of arrogance [such as beauty, power, wealth, etc.,] is a blessing which is possible to be termed as a perfection, irrespective of it being a perfection or not in reality. Some express pride over their contemporaries on abundance of alcohol consumption and copulation because they think their actions amount to [some type of] perfection that they have, although this belief is based on ignorance. These are the types of things [in the aforementioned] that are causes of arrogance and it is done against those who are devoid of these [characteristics] or have them but to a comparatively lesser degree.

Morals, Manners Character Traits and Inner Disposition of Humble People and Explanations of Actions that Show the Influence of Arrogance or Humility: It should be known that arrogance is in the habits and mannerism of an individual such as making a scornful or angry face, seeing through the corner of one's eyes, putting head on one's chest, sitting with a pillow, or it is in one's utterances including the tone of the voice, the delivery of letters and words, and style of giving response [back to people]. Arrogance is also in walking, getting up, sitting and bodily movements and gestures. Changing one's state [of being or expressions] can also become an expression of arrogance. Among the arrogant, there are some who express arrogance in all of their actions and words and some arrogant people are arrogant in some matters while being humble in some others. In the following, some habits [and expressions of arrogance] are being explained.

For example, some people want to have others stand before them with hands tied in front [as a gesture of respect, honor, or subservience to an authority figure] or have others stand up when they arrive. Ali (May God be pleased with him) said, "If you want to see a person of Hell, just look at the person who is sitting but many people are respectfully standing in front of one". Anas (May God be pleased with him) narrates [in a prophetic tradition] that prophetic companions had so much love for Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) that they did not have for anyone else. When they used to see him, they did not use to stand up [for him out of

their love and respect for him even though they wanted to] because they knew that he did not like them to stand up for him.

Some arrogant people do not like to start walking until there is someone to follow them. Abu Darda (May God be pleased with him) said, "A servant [of God] is remote from God as long as there is someone walking behind one". Sometimes when Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) walked with his companions, he used to ask them to get ahead of him and he himself walked behind them. (Narrated by *Hadith* collections *Abu Mansur al-Daylami* and *Musnad al-Firdous*)

The purpose of this was either to educate the prophetic companions or in this way, he wanted to remove the Satanic insinuations of arrogance and self-aggrandizement from his self (*Nafs*). It is also a habit of the arrogant that they do not want to be seated next to people who are lower in social status compared to them, but they want them to be seated respectfully in front of them. This is also against [the mannerism of] humility. Anas (May God be pleased with him) narrates that if any little girl of Medina came and grabbed the hand of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) and stood there while he was walking on the path [to get somewhere], the prophet [used to stand there and] did not let go of her hand until she herself let go of it to walk away [out of the absolute humility that the prophet had and his affection for children]. This is also a habit of arrogant that they avoid sitting close to patients and stay far from them. This is also arrogance. Once a man came to Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) whose face was full of chicken box pimples with water coming out of them. At that time, some people were sitting with the prophet and having a meal with him. When he came, the prophet got up and had him sit next to him [and expressed no revulsion for his state of illness and instead, showed him his affection and empathy as a healing for his soul and soothing for his heart]. Some people do not like to do any of their own household works with their own hand. This is also against humility. Some arrogant [people] do not like to walk with their own stuff. This method is also against the habits of the humble. Dressing and wearing clothes can express both humility and arrogance. Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him said), "The finery of clothes engenders pride in the heart". Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

مَنْ تَرَكَ زِينَةً لِلّٰهِ وَوَضَعَ ثِيَابًا حَسَنَةً تَوَاضُعًا لِلّٰهِ وَابْتِغَاءً لِمَرْضَاتِهِ كَانَ حَقًّا عَلَى اللّٰهِ أَنْ يُدْخِرَ لَهُ عَبْقَرِيَّ الْجَنَّةِ

"One who leaves ornamentation, embellishment and gaudy display (*Zeenah*) for the sake of God, due to humility and leaves fine clothes to seek God's approval, it is incumbent upon God to store the best dress from the Paradise for such a person". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Abu Na'eem* on the authority of Abdullah ibn Abbas [May God be pleased with him])

كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَالْبَسُوا وَتَصَدَّقُوا فِي غَيْرِ سَرَفٍ وَلَا مَخِيلَةٍ

"Eat, drink, dress up and give in charity neither with excessiveness (wastefulness) nor with arrogance". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Tirmidhi* on the authority of Amr ibn Shu'aib from his grandfather)

Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said to his companions, "What is the matter with you? You people wear the dress of monks and have hearts of beasts in your chests! Wear the dress of kings and kill your hearts (lower self) with God-fear". One habit of humility is that when someone curses or causes pain or usurps the rights [of one], one is forbearing and tolerant and expresses humility. That is real humility. We mention this as a summary that the apex of beautiful morals, manners, characteristics, inner traits and dispositions (*Ikhlaq*) and humility [for the entire humanity for all times to come] is the beautiful pattern of conduct of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him). This way it is imperative to follow his beautiful example and these should be made into one's teacher and guide [on the spiritual path].

Cure of Arrogance and Method of Acquiring Humility

We know from what's mentioned in previous pages that arrogance is a fatal disease and there is rarely anyone in creation who is protected from this disease. Then this disease is not eradicated with mere intent and wish, instead, its cure and usage of such medicines are needed that can eradicate it. Cure of arrogance is performed by two methods. One method is to pull out the roots of this disease from the heart. Second method is to remove the causes that makes one commit arrogance.

First Method of Curing Arrogance: This method of cure has two forms: Knowledge-based and practical. Without using both forms of this cure, complete cure (recovery and ensuing health) is not attained.

Knowledge-based Cure: Is that human being attains the Gnosis (complete understanding and recognition) of one's self (*Nafs*) and of the Creator of the self (i.e., God). If one attains true Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*) then it is hoped that the disease of arrogance will be dispelled. This is because if a human being attains deep understanding of one's self, one will surely arrive at the conclusion that the self is an extremely humiliated and lowly thing. The only thing befitting it is humility, humiliation, and meekness. If one [also] attains the Gnosis of one's Lord then this certitude will surely be born [in the heart] that characteristics like greatness and majesty are only befitting the glory of God [and not to a human being, so best course of action and state of being for a human being is to stay humble and submissive to God's Majesty]. There are detailed discussions on the Gnosis of the Lord and His greatness and loftiness [in Ghazali's compendium of wisdom "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God"]. Even though the topic of knowing the self is no less detailed oriented, nevertheless, we write here only as much that is sufficient to engender the traits of humility and meekness [before God's glory, grandeur, and majesty]. For that, we will make just one verse of Qur'an a topic of our deliberation, instead of a long discussion:

قُتِلَ ٱلْإِنسَٰنُ

مَآ أَكْفَرَهُۥ ﴿١٧﴾ مِنْ أَىِّ شَىْءٍ خَلَقَهُۥ ﴿١٨﴾ مِن نُّطْفَةٍ خَلَقَهُۥ فَقَدَّرَهُۥ ﴿١٩﴾ ثُمَّ

ٱلسَّبِيلَ يَسَّرَهُۥ ﴿٢٠﴾ ثُمَّ أَمَاتَهُۥ فَأَقْبَرَهُۥ ﴿٢١﴾ ثُمَّ إِذَا شَآءَ أَنشَرَهُۥ ﴿٢٢﴾

"Woe unto the human being for being so ungrateful [to God]! God created one (human being) with what? Created with sperm drop then created one's shape then created the organs with measure then made the path easy for one [to be born and come into the world] then gave one death then took one into the grave then when God wants, He will resurrect one." (Qur'an, Chapter 80, Verses 17-22)

In this verse, the human beginning, ending and states in between have been alluded to. If human being casts a glance on one's beginning, ending and the situation of one's life in between, one will understand the meaning of this Divine verse. The beginning of human being is that one did not even have any mentioning [before birth] as one was extinct and remained in the veil of extinction for a long time [since eternity] to such an extent that one's beginning of extinction is not even known. What can be more humiliating and lowly than to be in extinction and not being even around? Then God created one with an extremely lowly and filthy thing. In other words, God made one first with earth soil then created one with sperm then with blood then created a congealed form with blood then made bones then put flesh on the bones [in the womb of the mother]. This is the beginning of the human creation. Even after [initial] creation, one remained on bad composition because one was not created completely in the beginning instead, one was just like a lifeless stone as did not have the power and ability to hear, see, move, perceive, know and understand. One started [one's journey of life] first on death (extinction) before life, weakness before ability and power, ignorance before knowledge, blindness before seeing, deafness before hearing, dumbness before speaking, misguidance before guidance, poverty before wealth, and helplessness and inability before strength and ability.

God then created bodily organs that are the manifestation of the signs and wonders of God. When one was deprived of these organs, one was in dire need but God made one wealthy [by granting one wonderous physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual abilities even before one has the ability to ask for them], one was hungry but God granted sustenance for the stomach, one was naked but God covered one's body, one was misguided but God granted one guidance. Look and see with what plan God created human being and guided [to truth who sought it] then watch the rebelliousness of the human being! How ungrateful one is and how great of an ignoramus one is! Cast a glance on God's blessing and favor! How He took out human being from humiliation, lowliness and filth and ascended one to loftiness and greatness [by means of the loftiness of the soul that is the crux of the human existence and main Divinely imbued instrument for attaining Gnosis, attaining the truth and reaching God, who is the source and origin or all existences], and granted existence from extinction. Can there be anything more insignificant and lowlier than nothingness and non-existence? Is there a degree lower than absolute extinction (non-existence)? God made one into an

existence [with the gift of life which is God's greatest favor on all human beings], first from lowly earth soil that is trampled under the feet so that one remains aware of the lowliness of one's being and keep the knowledge and understanding of one's self (*Nafs*). Then God completed His favors upon one so that one may recognize and know one's Lord in the light of these Divine favors, attain Gnosis of God's glory, honor and grandeur so that one could know that grandeur and greatness is only suitable to Him [and to none else].

Spouses were created so that the human generations can continue unceasingly. One whose state of beginning (origin) is this and whose situations are such, what right does such a one has to be boastful, imperious, proud, and arrogant? One is certainly extremely lowly among the lowly and extremely weak among the weak. However, it is the habit of an insignificant and lowly [because of one's lowly origins] person that when one ostensibly attains a high status [in the world due to things like fame, wealth, power, etc.], one starts to imagine oneself as great, although considering oneself as great is in itself an abasement. Power, strength, honor, and greatness are all for God alone. However, if human being had been created completely [without any involvement from God] and all of one's affairs had been entrusted to one, and one had the ability to maintain one's own existence, then one would have the right to be rebellious, and to neglect one's own beginning and end.

Whether human being agrees to one's loss or not, one is compelled to be hungry and thirsty, compelled to get sick, and compelled to die [in this earthly existence]. One is incapable of owning one's own profit and loss. One is neither an owner of one's good nor of one's bad. One wants to get knowledge of something but gains nothing but ignorance, one wants to remember something but forgets it, one wants to keep one's heart busy with an important matter, but insinuations grab hold of one and force one to take a deep dive in the boundless ocean of worries and anxieties. One neither has control over one's heart nor has power over one's self. It is the heart that always wishes for things that have one's destruction secretly embedded within them, and hates those things that have one's life associated with them. One enjoys a wide variety of food, although these foods are fatal for one, one hates medicines although they grant one riddance from the disease and health to the body. In any moment of one's days and nights, is one safeguarded against this danger that one's hearing gets snatched away or sight gets taken away or organs get paralyzed or intellect gets destroyed or soul gets departed and everything gets snatched away from one that one likes in the world? The pitiful human being is an embodiment of abject helplessness! If the Exalted Creator (God) leaves one [with respite], one stays and if takes away [one's life], one becomes extinct. One is like a purchased slave who has nothing in one's control nor has any control over other person's actions. What could be a more humbled thing than that? Where is arrogance that is suitable for such a one? The conclusion of human being is death. In other words, the soul will be taken away from a human being. One's power of hearing, seeing, knowledge, power, senses, perceptions, movement, etc., all powers and capabilities will be taken away. One will become like a stone and will become just like what one was before [i.e., a lifeless entity in a state of nothingness and extinction]. The shape of the organs will [initially] stay but there will be no movement

and sense. It will then be placed in soil [of the grave]. It will then become filthy, smelly carcass similar to what it was before birth in the form of filthy congealed flesh. Organs will then rot, and their components will spread apart, bones will disintegrate into particles. Insects will eat away all the flesh of the body. They will first enter into the socket of the eyes and finish them, then they will attack the cheeks and clear them up. No part of the body will remain that will not become filth after going into the stomachs of these insects. The better state of the human being is to become like what one used to be, i.e., after rotting and decomposing become dirt again. After existing, one becomes extinct again as if one never existed.

After becoming a patch in earth, one stays in this state but there is another revolution awaiting one in the form of resurrection on the Day of Judgment. All dispersed particles of body will unite again into the body and one will be raised up from the grave to face the horrors of the Day of Judgment. One will be horrified to see the scenes around one - Day of Judgment is on, universe is scattered around as cotton balls in the air, earth is all transformed, mountains are flying around, moon, sun and stars have lost this lights, it's all dark around, all over the place one will see the wings of the stern angels, Hell will be calling in all its denizens, criminals [who committed crimes, excesses and evils of all sorts] will look at the Heaven with regretful yearning, the register of deeds (one for every human being) will be open, and criminals will be told to read their register of deeds [that records every deed, good or bad, done by human beings during their earthly existence]. They will ask, "What's in those registers of deeds?" They will be told, "In your worldly life where you were very happy and proud, two angels were appointed on [each one of] you who used to write down all of your words and deeds, whether small or big, your eating and drinking, getting up and sitting, everything is written in these register of deeds. You have forgotten but God has captured each and every movement of yours and each and every matter of yours [in this register of deeds]. Come and have accountability and be ready to answer [for you deeds], otherwise be ready for the punishment". Soon upon hearing this, hearts will tremble with fear even though the register of deeds have not been opened yet. When they look at them, they will say, "Alas! These register of deeds, contain everything! Small or big, all sins are enumerated here!"

This is the final end of human being! Is it acceptable for a person in this state to have arrogance and superiority? Human being's state in the beginning and intermediate period of existence [called life in this world,] is known. If the ending state is also known to one, one would like to become a pig or a dog instead of a human being, so that one would not even hear the address or face any punishment [of the Day of Judgment]. Reality is that, if a human being is deserving of Hell in God's judgment, then a pig is much better than one - it was dust before and becomes dust again, it will neither go through the phase of accountability nor will face any punishment. One whose ending is such, what right does one has to be arrogant? How is one able to be proud and boastful? Yes, if God forgives one then it's a separate matter [as one can be happy and proud at that point]. What does one see in one's self that makes one so convinced of one's superiority and excellence? There is no servant [of God] who has not sinned and has become deserving of Divine retribution, except that God forgives one out of His

largesse and kindness. It is hoped from His mercy that He will forgive. One does not know what one's final end will be. It is enough for one to be in a state of fear and sorrow about the accountability of the Day of Judgment, and wait for the humiliation and abasement of that day. This was the detail of the knowledge-based cure of arrogance.

Practical Cure of Arrogance: Practical cure of arrogance is that for the sake of God, one should adopt the actions of humble people towards God's creations, and persevere in them as enough light has been shed on this quality of humility, while mentioning the states of the righteous. Someone asked Salman (May God be pleased with him), "Why don't you wear new clothes?" He replied, "I am a slave [of God]. The day I receive [from God] the proclamation of emancipation (freedom), I will wear new clothes". He pointed to the freedom of the Hereafter [that one attains by passing the trials and examination of life and declared successful on the Day of Judgment at the end of Divine accountability]. Humility is completed (imbued) by means of actions [of humility]. That is the reason why arrogant Arabs [who were still coming out of the era of ignorance at the time of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) who was guiding them towards a complete spiritual transformation] were [Divinely] commanded to have faith [in God] and pray [to God] simultaneously and were told that prayer is the foundation of the path to God (*Deen*). There are certain secrets and mysteries in prayers and on that basis, it is right to term prayers as the foundation of faith. Among these secrets is that prayer is the best manifestation of humility. Standing [in the state of prayer] in front of God with hands tied in front, bowing and prostrating [before God] are all those actions that fully express humility [provided heart is also present during prayers]. Before the advent of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him), Arabs had this temperament that they did not like bowing they heads before anyone, and to them all the actions of prayers were symbols of humiliation and lowliness. [Pagan] Arabs considered the act of prostration [to God in the state of prayers] as the height of humiliation (humility) and lowliness. That's why, they were first commanded to perform prayers after faith [in God], so that this act [of performing prayers] will break their pride and arrogance so that humility gets born in the hearts.

The upshot is that, one who attains Gnosis (knowledge and understanding of the path to God) should keep an eye on all matters and causes that imply arrogance, then one should act on their opposites and should persevere in those actions so that one becomes accustomed to humility.

Heart does not become a garden of beautiful morals, manners, character traits and inner dispositions (*Ikhlaq*) until it is irrigated with the fountains of both knowledge and actions. It is because the [bodily] organs are related to the realm of the seen (*'Alam al-Zahir* or visible world) and heart [or soul] belongs to the realm of the angels (*'Alam al-Malakoot* or the spiritual realm). In between the two realms is a secret area. That's why, the actions of the organs are surely influenced by the heart [as heart is the dominant ruler of human existence].

Second Method of Curing Arrogance: It is related to the arrogance that is related to aforementioned seven causes. Real perfection consists of knowledge and [good, pious,

and righteous] actions and anything other than them is bound to perish even though it may ostensibly seem like a perfection. Other than knowledge and actions, every perfection is an imagined perfection. The knowledge-based and practical cure of all seven causes of arrogance is explained below.

First Cause of Arrogance - Lineage: One who becomes arrogant due to one's lineage or genealogy should cure one's heart by attaining a deeper understanding of two matters. The meaning of this type of pride and arrogance is that one tries to achieve honor from someone else's [perceived] perfection. If the one who is arrogant because of the lineage, is deficient in one's personal qualities, then how can one fulfill one's deficiency due to perfection and greatness of one's ancestors? Secondly, one should know one's real lineage, in other words, one should get to know the real introduction to one's father and grandfather. One's father is also made out of a filthy drop of sperm and one's grandfather (or great grandfather) is now dust. The origin of human being is dirt that is trampled under the feet. Should a human being, made out of dirt (soil), practice arrogance? If it is said that the ascribing of human being to dirt is very remote, then we will say, "You should then look to the thing you are ascribed to very closely which is the sperm-drop". In this respect, one should consider oneself as lowly. Ponder over this! Neither the father has any nobility of origin nor the grandfather! Where did the nobility in their offspring [who is currently around] have come from? One's origin is dirt and one has come from sperm. If this is one's real lineage, it is extremely bad - one (dirt) is trampled under the feet and the other one (sperm) if it touches the body, needs to be washed. One who is aware of this reality of the lineage, will never be arrogant. What can be lowlier than the fact that human being is composed of dirt and blood?

Second Cause of Arrogance - Beauty: The second cause of arrogance is beauty [or handsomeness]. Its cure is to cast an intelligent glance at one's inner being and not look at one's outer being as animals look. One who looks at the inner being, is aware of one's faults, reprehensible traits and shortcomings that put blemish on one's [outer] beauty. Furthermore, human organs are replete with filth. Such is the state of one's middle part of existence [which is this worldly life after birth]. One's beginning has already been explained as started with the combination of sperm and menstrual blood. [That also shows that the human being is very humble in one's origin]. Nevertheless, one who keeps an eye on this reality that one is born out of filth, lives with filth [in one's existence], and will become filth after death cannot be proud of one's beauty. The similitude of human beauty is of vegetation that grows on a pile of garbage that ostensibly seems pleasing even though its origin is filth. Or the similitude of human beauty is of the flowers and vegetation of wilderness that seem pleasing but will scatter into pieces (dry stubble) when [dry] wind blows over them after some time. Even if human beauty had been durable and everlasting [spanning one's entire lifetime] and had been devoid of all blemishes, one does not have the right to be proud and arrogant over someone who is not beautiful because just like one's beauty is not personal [as one did not create it oneself], someone else's lack of beauty is also not personal. Beauty is not durable or long lasting. All the time, there is this worry that it may fade away or gone due to pimples, injury, or some other disease. Every day and night we

encounter situations where people have lost their beauty [so having pride and arrogance over something ephemeral and transient like beauty, is outright foolish and repugnant].

Third Cause of Arrogance – Power and Strength: Power and strength is another cause of arrogance. Its cure is to deliberate over the diseases and illnesses that have been imposed over human beings. If one needs to see a sample of human helplessness, it can be seen at the time when a small bodily organ is impacted by pain that makes one more incapable than all incapables and more desperate than all desperate people. The state of human helplessness is such that even if a fly takes away something, one is not able to get it back. If an insignificant insect, mosquito, or ant enters one's ear or nose, they will kill one without death. If a thorn gets stuck in the foot or any other part of the body, it will make one incapable to walk. Fever lasting for one day can cause so much loss of strength that years of nutrition cannot compensate for it. One who cannot even endure a thorn, fight a mosquito, or defend oneself against a fly should even be proud and boastful of one's power and strength? No matter how strong a human being is, one cannot be stronger than a donkey, cow, elephant, or a camel. Can one express pride in a characteristic in which animals are superior?

Fourth and Fifth Causes of Arrogance – Abundance of Wealth and Large Number of Supporters, Helpers, Followers and Admirers: One cause of arrogance is abundance of wealth. Another cause is abundance of friends, helpers, followers, and admirers. It also includes arrogance due to ranks awarded by kings (government authorities). This arrogance is not like the arrogance on beauty and strength because beauty and strength are part of intrinsic human traits while, wealth and large number of friends are excluded from them. This type of arrogance is extremely bad as if one expresses arrogance over one's horse or house. Now if horse dies or home gets demolished, this arrogance will end, and one will become humiliated [because one is deprived of intrinsic personal qualities, hence, they are more ephemeral]. One who expresses arrogance after getting a rank or honor from kings is deprived of intrinsic qualities and relied on a heart that is more perturbed than a [boiling] pot. The hearts of kings get changed very quickly. When they become disillusioned with someone, they do not desist from anything to get one into a terrible state. One who is arrogant on something that is not a part of one's intrinsic nature, is a pure ignoramus. For example, wealth is a trait that is not intrinsic to one and is a distinction that can be stolen by a thief in a moment and make an affluent person humiliated and needy. Those qualities that are not intrinsic to one, are not permanent, instead, they become a source of hardships and punishment in the Hereafter. To be proud of these qualities is ignorance. Furthermore, these are in God's hands who have imparted these qualities and not in human hands. If He wishes, He can retain them for you and if He wishes, He can seize them. You are only a bought off slave as you have no power over anything. A person familiar with these facts cannot commit arrogance. Can someone in that state [whose everything is in God's hands] express pride over one's ability, wealth, power, and perfection or consider one's self as humiliated? Such is the state of every intelligent person who possesses a penetrating insight (*Baseerah*). Such a one understands that one is not an owner of oneself, nor of one's body, organs, or wealth. Despite that, one

is beset with harms, lusts, sufferings, and diseases that are threatening one's destruction all the time. This is the method of curing the causes of arrogance that are not intrinsic to human nature.

Sixth Cause of Arrogance – Knowledge: Being arrogant over knowledge [one possesses] is a fatal disease. Sometimes its cure becomes very difficult and recovery from this disease requires intense hard work and struggle. The reason is that just like the honor of knowledge is great with God, similarly it is great with the servants [of God]. Compared to knowledge, wealth and beauty have an insignificant status, rather, the light of knowledge and actions [based on knowledge], impart them appreciation and honor. Umar (May God be pleased with him) said, "The mistake of a scholar, misguides masses". Divine Law has so many excellences of knowledge listed in it, that it's hard to imagine that a scholar would not think highly of oneself and not consider one's status as higher than the ignoramus.

The cure of arrogance over knowledge is that a scholar should consider and ponder over two things. One is that God's proofs are more complete and firmer on a scholar (or scholastic theologian). Furthermore, what is tolerated from an ignoramus, even a tenth of it is not tolerated from a scholar because a person who disobeys God after knowledge and Gnosis, commits the worst sin of not paying the rights of God's blessings of knowledge. God says in Qur'an:

وَٱتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ ٱلَّذِىٓ ءَاتَيْنَٰهُ ءَايَٰتِنَا فَٱنسَلَخَ مِنْهَا

"And rehearse to these people the condition of a person whom We granted Our verses (Divine signs, knowledge and wisdom emanating from God's Gnosis), but such a one got out of them [due to not appreciating Divine blessings upon oneself and instead, ran after low, base desires for transient and short-lived worldly gains]." (Qur'an, Chapter 7, Verse 175)

In the next verse, God said this about the same person:

فَمَثَلُهُۥ كَمَثَلِ ٱلْكَلْبِ إِن تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْهِ يَلْهَثْ

"So, the state of this person became like that of a dog who gasps for air if you strike it and still gasps for air if you leave it alone." (Qur'an, Chapter 7, Verse 176)

Abdullah bin Abbas (May God be pleased with him) said [in explanation of above two verses] that [they have been revealed about] Bal'am Ba'oura (a saint of high spiritual caliber from the Children of Israel at the time of Prophet Moses [Peace and blessings of God be upon him]) was granted God's Gnosis, but [did not appreciate it and] ended up preferring worldly lusts over it, and God resembled him to a dog who gasps for air in all situations. Bal'am also behaved like a dog, as no matter how much the treasures of wisdom were granted to him [out of Divine largesse and generosity] or not granted to him, he would not relinquish his lusts under any circumstances. This very danger is the greatest one for the scholar, that a scholar will be subjected to more accountability and reckoning [for one's deeds and misdeeds as they have a lasting impact on the masses,

being those who are heirs of the Prophets after the end of the prophetic era, charged with the responsibility of guiding people to the truth and to the path leading them to eternal happiness and endless success]. Which scholar is not the one who exhorted people to righteousness and oneself remain deprived of it? A scholar who considers one's rank as superior to that of an ignoramus, should think that even though one's status is above that of an ignoramus, compared to such a one, a scholar is in a more dangerous situation [due to the expectation to be at a higher moral ground than the masses and to set a higher example to follow for the masses]. [Realization of] This danger is itself an impediment to arrogance [over knowledge].

If one ponders over the upcoming dangers, not an iota of arrogance will be left in one and one will not think of being a great person from among the creations. Its parable is that of a slave who has been commanded by his master to do a few tasks. [This parable is very appropriate as all human beings are slaves of God and God is their Master Supreme]. He started those tasks but left some of them. Some of those tasks were done but done in a deficient way and some were completed but he kept doubting whether he managed to do them according to the wishes of his master or not. During that, an informant informed him, "Your master has called upon you and he will deprive you of your possessions and will humiliate you. He will have you stand outside his door in intense sunlight in heat. When you become extremely distraught and helpless, he will do your accountability. Tasks that you did not complete correctly or did not complete at all, he will interrogate you about them and will proclaim his decision for your punishment. Then you will be imprisoned in a dark dungeon where you will always live and will not find the slightest rest". That slave also knows that his master has meted out the same treatment to many slaves, even though some of them have been forgiven. He, however, does not know to which group of slaves does he belongs to - those who are involved in an intense punishment or those who have been granted a proclamation of forgiveness. Deliberating over this reality will keep the lower self in a state of humility. Arrogance will get smashed into pieces. One will become insignificant in one's own eyes. Sorrow and fear will dominate one's heart and mind and one will be unable to have arrogance on any humble and insignificant person from among the creations, instead, one will treat everyone with humility on the hope that the other person could be a [potential] intercessor at the time of [impending] Divine retribution. The doors of deep deliberations are open for the scholar, if one sees the amount of violations to Divine commandments one has done by committing sins - not only one has used external organs as means of committing sins, one's inner being has been a center of sins [and transgressions] with ostentation (*Riya*), jealousy (*Hasad*), self-conceitedness (*'Ujub*) and hypocrisy (*Nifaq*). Ostensibly, the final end [of such a scholar or scholastic theologian] does not seem to be good. If a scholar thinks along those lines, it will liberate one from the slavery of arrogance.

Second thing that a scholar needs to think about is that arrogance (grandeur and majesty) is only befitting to God. If one is being arrogant, one will be deserving of God's displeasure and will be termed as a castaway slave of God. God wants humility from one. It is one of the Divine sayings, "Your value is there with Me as long as you have no value of yourself in your own heart. If you consider value of your own self, then you

have no value near me". It is apparent from this that a scholar should take (exact) only those works (actions) from one's self that God likes [and should desist from everything that God dislikes, as a scholar of God and of the path of God is expected to have higher moral and ethical standards than the masses]. Pondering over this reality is expected to eradicate arrogance, even though, a scholar has this certitude that one has not committed any sins or has imagined that one will not [ever] commit any sins, that will also remove the darkness of arrogance from one's heart. This type of deliberations, insights and contemplations helped remove arrogance from the prophets. They had this certitude that a person who rivals with God in this attribute of Divine glory, grandeur, and majesty, gets relegated (lowered) by God. It is God's commandment to consider your lower selves as lowly and insignificant so that your rank near God is raised up.

Seventh Cause of Arrogance – God-fear: Arrogance over acts of Divine obedience and worship is a tremendous tribulation (*Fitna*), and the method of cure is to make it compulsory on oneself to have humility towards all the creations, and to know that one should not be arrogant on a person of knowledge, no matter how such a person is in acting upon one's knowledge. Qur'an says:

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي ٱلَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَٱلَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ۗ

"Say (O Muhammad)! Are the ones who know (have knowledge) and those who don't know (those who are ignorant) can [ever] be equal?" (Qur'an, Chapter 39, Verse 9)

Other than this verse, there are many other verses and prophetic traditions that attest to the excellence of knowledge [especially of the Divine knowledge]. If a worshipful person says that these verses have been revealed about a scholar who acts upon one's knowledge [who is sincere and is devoid of all blemishes, shortcomings, and hypocrisies] and not about a scholar who commits sins. The reply to that is that you have not considered this verse [from Qur'an]:

إِنَّ ٱلْحَسَنَٰتِ يُذْهِبْنَ ٱلسَّيِّـَٔاتِ ۚ

"Verily, good righteous deeds erase evil deeds [as the Divinely instructed way to eradicate one's wrongs, evils, transgressions and sins is to erase them away by turning one's life around. It happens by believing in God and acting on the implications of this belief by doing good, righteous, noble, sincere, helpful and beneficial endeavors that help others at any possible level]." (Qur'an, Chapter 11, Verse 114)

Just like it is possible that a scholar will be held accountable on account of one's knowledge, similarly, it is also possible that the knowledge will become a means of salvation for a scholar and expiation for one's sins. Since a worshipper does not know about the treatment to be meted out to a scholar, whether there will be accountability or one will be granted salvation, that's why, it is not valid for a worshipper to debase a scholar. Instead, one should remain humble towards a scholar [out of respect for the knowledge a scholar possesses]. It can be said here that in this way, an opportunity is being afforded to the possessors of knowledge (a [religious] scholar or scholastic theologian) to remain superior to worshippers and to commit arrogance [on that basis] since knowledge is superior to worship. Just like worshippers should not have

arrogance over scholars, similarly scholars should also refrain from arrogance and both of them should be apprehensive about their lower selves (*Nafs*). Human beings have been [Divinely] appointed as watchers over their lower selves and responsible for its correct training. That's why, it is suitable for every person to be apprehensive of their lower selves and in matters concerning others, hope and positive thoughts should be dominant. Sometimes it happens that one worships with external bodily organs only, but certain hidden sins are born in the heart due to which one becomes deserving of Divine retribution. [Sometimes] An individual is apparently involved in evils but in one's heart, there are illuminated lamps of God's love, sincerity, God-fear, and respect. God converts the state of one's heart [like this] into expiation of one's sins. The results will come forth on the Day of Judgment when many openly evil people will be much better off than many [devout] worshippers. It is possible and, in these matters, one should think of distant possibilities as near possibilities and that state will develop when you fear for your [own] lower self.

Intelligence demands that you do not pay attention to what's possible for others, but you should deliberate on matters pertaining to yourself that are causes of concern. It is because, every person faces the punishment of one's own sins, furthermore, there is no reduction in one's Divine retribution due to someone else's Divine retribution. If you adopt this method, you will not ever consider yourself superior or better than anyone else. There are two types of people - some are those who are better than you and some are those who are worse than you [in excellences and inner qualities]. You should have humility towards both of these groups of people. If someone is better than you [in inner character traits, personal qualities, goodness, righteousness and spirituality] then you should be happy to meet with such a one and have this desire that God makes you like that. If someone is worse, you should then think that perhaps this person may earn salvation while you may not - perhaps such a one does something good in one's inner being that may be good for one or one may have a good habit due to which God may have mercy upon one and may accept one's repentance and grant one a good ending with beautiful actions [towards the end of one's life]. My righteous deeds may just be outward [with no inner excellences due to lack of sincerity towards God] that is not good for me, instead there is a danger of harms lurking in these acts of worship [such as show off or attaining worldly benefits with my outward religiosity and pretenses] that may nullify any rewards (Divine recompense in terms of one's Divine forgiveness, acceptance and proximity) of that worship. Only after dealing with different groups of people like this, intellect will be perfected, and one will become deserving of [moral] leadership role [by excelling in goodness]. Nevertheless, one who is conscientious of the possibility of being at loss, as the Writer of destiny (God) may have written misery in one's destiny, should never have arrogance - it is preferable to have fear dominate such a one and consequently think of everyone else as better than one.

Condemnation of Self-Conceitedness and its Harms

The evil of self-conceitedness [or self-righteousness] is proven in the book of God and in prophetic narrations as God says:

وَهُمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ صُنْعًا

"And they remained in this very thought (delusion) that they have been doing good things [and nothing wrong can possibly be done by them]." (Qur'an, Chapter 18, Verse 104)

It has been said in this verse that a human being [always] has good thoughts and self-righteousness about one's actions - at times when one is on error and at times when one is not on error. In one prophetic narration, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

ثَلٰثٌ مُهْلِكَاتٌ شُحٌّ مُطَاعٌ وَهَوًى مُتَّبَعٌ وَإِعْجَابُ الْمَرْءِ بِنَفْسِهِ

"Three things are destructive - miserliness that one is an adherent of, base desires from the lower self that one is a follower of, and a person considering one's self as great [in a state of self-conceitedness]".

Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (May God be pleased with him) said: "Destruction is in two things: Despair and self-righteousness". He combined these two things because *Sa'adah* (eternal happiness and endless success) is not achieved without efforts, seeking, and striving. A despaired person neither makes efforts nor struggles. A self-righteous person has this belief that one has [already] achieved one's desired goals and does not even makes efforts because of this belief. A thing already present [or believed to be present] is not sought and the impossible is also not sought. A self-righteous person thinks that one has achieved eternal happiness and endless success and a despaired person thinks that seeking it is impossible. Divine saying is:

فَلَا تُزَكُّوٓا۟ أَنفُسَكُمْ ۖ

"Do not ascribe [inner] purity, holiness and piety to yourselves." (Qur'an, Chapter 53, Verse 32)

Someone asked Aisha (May God be pleased with her), "When does one becomes bad?" She replied, "When one thinks 'I am good'". It should be known that the harms of self-righteousness are innumerable. Among other things, it produces arrogance and many harms are engendered from arrogance. These harms are with the people. There are comparatively more harms of self-righteousness in matters related to God. For example, if one is indulged in self-righteousness, one forgets about the sins and does not pay any attention to them. One entirely forgets some sins and if some of them come into one's remembrance, one does not do anything to eradicate them thinking, "I [only] do righteous deeds. My 'sins' are not sins. If they exist, they are so insignificant that they don't require any correction or expiation". Instead, one thinks that one's big and small sins have been forgiven by God. One thinks highly of one's worship and righteous deeds, expresses pride and arrogance over them, rather, one thinks of them as one doing favor on God and forgets that one was able to do righteous deeds due to God's largesse and favors. When human being expresses self-righteousness on one's

actions, one closes the eyes from its harms which is an indication of all of one's effort going to waste. If outer deeds are not purified and devoid of all contaminations [from evils], their profit is very little. Only the one who has fear [of God] dominating one, finds out about the harms of self-righteousness. A person afflicted with self-righteousness has pride over one's lower self (*Nafs*) and has pride towards God, and thinks that one is safe and protected from God's punishment as one has a status before God, has greatness, rather, one has this favor on God and right that God has regards towards one's actions and grant one their recompense. The so-called one's favors on God, are in reality, God's blessings, and endowments to one. Self-righteousness compels one to praise and ascribe inner purity to oneself.

When one has self-righteousness and self-aggrandizement on one's opinions, actions, and intelligence, one neither benefit from another nor consult anyone, instead insists on one's opinions and considers it an insult [to oneself] to ask a person of knowledge. Sometimes, one feels happy by having self-righteousness over wrong ideas in the mind merely because these occurred in one's heart and not in someone else's heart, then one insists on one's right or wrong ideas neither listening to any admonisher's advice nor accepting any sermon of a sermonizer. Instead, one looks at others as if they are ignorant and insist on one's errors. If wrong opinion has been expressed in worldly matters, then one becomes deprived of one's purpose and if it happens in matters related to beliefs, one gets harmed forever. If one had not trusted one's own [fallacious] opinions and had obtained illumination from the light of Qur'an, had sought help from religious scholars, had persevered in the study of knowledge and gatherings of wisdom, had continued with the act of seeking answers to questions related to legal matters (*Masa-il* or scholastic theology) from people of knowledge and wisdom, then one would certainly have arrived at the truth. The greatest harm of self-righteousness is that one indulges in the conjecture (supposition or illusion) of success, and hence becomes lazy in making efforts and strivings, and thinks that one is not in need of every [righteous] action [in the spiritual path], even though, one is not oblivious to [righteous] deeds, and certain destruction is one's destiny. We seek the beauty of Divine endowment of ability (*Husn al-Tawfeeq*) from God for obedience [to Him].

Causes of Self-Righteousness and their Cure

It should be known that the causes of arrogance are also the causes of self-righteousness. Causes of arrogance have been explained before. Sometimes, self-righteousness is engendered by causes that do not cause arrogance, such as self-righteousness on one's faulty opinions that seem good to one due to one's own ignorance. There are eight causes of self-righteousness and self-admiration:

First Cause: Is to have self-righteousness and self-admiration over physical qualities and characteristics such as the beauty of one's body (physical composition), appearance, health, strength, balance of organs, facial beauty, beauty of voice, etc.,

and as a result of that, one forgets that physical bodily beauty is God's blessing that is bound to decline and perish. Its cure is the same as what we have written in the chapter on arrogance that the person who has arrogance over one's beauty should imagine the filth of one's beginning and ending and should think that how many of the beautiful and handsome have slept in the land (buried in their graves after their demise) and their flower like faces have become heap of filth inside their graves.

Second Cause: Is that one has self-righteousness and self-admiration over one's strength and power which instills the desire in one to attack [first] in a war, putting oneself in destruction, be the first to kill the enemy [in a battle]. Its cure was mentioned before that one should consider that a day of fever can take out all the thoughts of grandeur in one and will dissipate all of one's strength that cause one to go around with pride. If one has self-righteousness and self-admiration over one's power and strength, it is possible that God imposes a calamity over an individual [or an entire group of people or nation] and take away this strength and power [that has been fueling their arrogance].

Third Cause: Is that one has self-righteousness and self-admiration on one's intelligence, wisdom, insights, and foresights and to think that one is well familiar with subtleties and inner wisdom behind worldly and religious matters. Such a person is self-opinionated (enamored of one's own opinions) and does not consult with anyone, instead, one thinks of all people as absolute ignoramus who disagree with one. Such a person has little to do with people of knowledge and insights, instead such a one does not even attentively listen to people to prove that, "I am complete in my opinions and intellect and I am in no need of anyone's guidance, instead, all people of knowledge are inferior to me and are lowly and debased compared to me". The cure of this [arrogance, self-righteousness, and self-admiration] is to thank God that He granted one intellect and understanding. One should also think that if one gets afflicted with a mental disease, will one be able to claim being an intelligent and perceptive person? It is possible that one gets infected with a disease that makes one oblivious to all consciousness and awareness, and [consequently] one roams around on streets [childishly], and little kids will look at one's actions and think of them as entertaining and laugh at them. It is possible that by having self-admiration and arrogance over one's intellect and not thanking the Grantor of intellect (God), one's intellect gets taken away. A believer should think of one's knowledge and intellect as little, even though one is perceptive, intelligent, and educated, having a wide circle of information. It is also a fact that a human being remains ignorant despite having abundance of knowledge and vastness of information and that the other information [that one does know] is something others know. When such is the state of one's knowledge compared to other human beings, what would be one's state of knowledge compared to God whose knowledge has the vastness that is far wider than the fathomless oceans. Considering one's intellect as deficient [and one's knowledge as very little], is the very wisdom. Look at the fools who do not consider anyone else more intelligent than them, although others laugh at their foolishness. Do not increase the list of foolish persons by practicing self-righteousness and self-admiration yourself. An intellectually deficient person is not aware of one's deficiency in the intellect and out of one's foolishness,

thinks that one is intelligent. It is better to evaluate one's intellect objectively, not trusting someone else's opinion, especially of one's friends who paint a rosy picture and cause an increase in one's self-righteousness and self-admiration by their false praises.

Fourth Cause: Is that one has self-righteousness and self-admiration over one's lineage like some people of Hashmi lineage (Banu Hashim is the tribe that Prophet Muhammad [Peace and blessings of God be upon him] belonged to). Many among them harbor this self-delusional thought that the greatness of their lineage is a guarantor of their salvation, and they would be forgiven because of their ancestors [who were models of piety and moral excellence]. Some people of noble lineage think that all people are their servants and slaves. The cure for this is to think that, "I opposed my ancestors [by going against their example (pattern of conduct)] and out of foolishness started to think that I became equal to them, even though, this is my mistake. I can be like them by following in their footsteps, but I do not follow them". Did they practice self-righteousness? Where did they have self-righteousness? Instead, they were embodiments of total humility. God-fear was embedded in their veins and in the fiber of their very beings. They considered the lowliest of the low things as superior to them. Their own self (*Nafs*) was lowly and debased in their own eyes even though they were higher [in spiritual ranks], not because of their lineage but due to their knowledge, Divine obedience, humbleness, and other beautiful [inner] attributes like them. In order to become like them, it is imperative that one follows them and adopt their good habits. God says the following about human lineage and genealogy:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقۡنَٰكُم مِّن ذَكَرٖ وَأُنثَىٰ

"O People! We created all of you from one man and one woman (i.e., from Adam and Eve [Peace and blessings of God be upon them both], hence the entity humanity, from the beginning till the end of time, has the same lineage)." (Qur'an, Chapter 49, Verse 13)

It means that there is no difference among yourselves in terms of your lineages (race, ethnicity, color, genealogy, tribes, communities and nations) [as you are all equal in the sight of God and no one has superiority over anyone on the basis of race, color, region, culture, nationality and other attributes like that]. Each and every one of you have been born out of one man and one woman. After this [verse], God explains the benefit (wisdom) of lineage:

وَجَعَلۡنَٰكُمۡ شُعُوبٗا وَقَبَآئِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوٓاْۚ

"And He made you into different nations and tribes so that you recognize and get to know each other." (Qur'an, Chapter 49, Verse 13)

[The Divine wisdom behind racial, ethnic, color, regional, tribal, and nationalistic differences is to get to know, appreciate, respect, and love each other and have a cordial, harmonious relationship with each other based on justice and equality]. After that, God says that the distinction and honor is based on pious awe, reverence, and fear of God (*Taqwa*) and not on lineage:

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ ۚ

"In the sight of God, the one with greater honor among you is the one who has greater awe, reverence, and fear of God [and God is the judge of that, you are not]." (Qur'an, Chapter 49, Verse 13)

Fifth Cause: Is that one has self-righteousness and self-admiration by attributing oneself to the helpers and supporters of cruel rulers (people of authority and power) and not giving any importance to one's affinity [in terms of blood relationship or spiritual connection] to people of faith and [spiritual] knowledge. The cure for that is to cast a glance at the humiliating activities of cruel rulers and their associates and see how they unleash oppression on God's servants, and see how shamefully they sow turmoil in the path to God (*Deen*). These people are under the wrath of God. If one could witness their faces in Hell that are loaded with filth and waves of stench coming out of them, one will develop so much abhorrence and revulsion that they will not even mention their names, instead, will absolve oneself of all connections to them and will castigate the one who associates with them. If it gets revealed to them, how much humiliation these cruel people are enduring on the Day of Judgment, angels are pulling their hair to drag them into Hell on their faces, one would prefer to ascribe oneself to dogs and pigs but would not want anyone to ascribe to those humans who have evil and devious inner beings. The right of the offsprings of cruel people, if God protects them from committing oppression, is to have gratitude to God for the safety of their path to God (*Deen*) and beseech God for forgiveness of their ancestors on the condition that they were believers.

Sixth Cause: Is that one expresses self-righteousness and self-admiration on the abundance of progeny, servants, relatives, friends, helpers, and followers as unbelievers of Mecca used to do. Its cure is the same as was mentioned in relation to arrogance that one should consider the weakness of oneself and of those people whose abundance makes one proud. Furthermore, one should think that every individual is a needy and insignificant human being who is neither an owner of one's profit nor of one's loss. On top of that, what's the benefit of expressing self-righteousness and self-admiration due to these people who will separate away [from one] with death? One person will go to one's own grave all alone. There will neither be any friend nor any sharer of grief. There will be no sympathetic familiar person, no father, no progeny, one's own people will lay one into the grave with their own hands and hand one over to insects, snakes, and scorpions. That will be the time when one will be in need of all of them, but they will be of no avail. Similarly, they will turn away their eyes on the Day of Judgment, instead, they will run away [from one]. The scenery of that day has been drawn by Qur'an as follows:

يَوْمَ يَفِرُّ ٱلْمَرْءُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ ﴿٣٤﴾
وَأُمِّهِۦ وَأَبِيهِ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَصَٰحِبَتِهِۦ وَبَنِيهِ ﴿٣٦﴾

"On that day, one will run away from one's brother, mother, father, spouse and progeny." (Qur'an, Chapter 80, Verse 34-36)

What is the benefit of expressing pride or exulting over the presence of people who are of no benefit when they are direly needed and will avoid one [when needed the most]? In the grave, on the Day of Judgment, and on the bridge of *Sirat* (a narrow bridge over Hell on the other end of which is Paradise, which is thinner than hair and sharper than a sword and every individual will have to pass over that bridge on the Day of Judgment as explained by the Prophetic teachings), a human being will only benefit from one's [pious, righteous] deeds and from the Divine grace. Those who neither have power over their own profit and loss, nor have any control over their own life and death, what benefit can they impart to someone else?

Seventh Cause: Is that one expresses self-righteousness and self-admiration on one's wealth and material possessions. Its cure is to cast a glance over the harms of wealth and material possessions and on the excellence of poor and their priority in entering the Paradise. Furthermore, one should see that wealth is a thing that comes and goes, it has no permanence. Also, wealth is not a characteristic that is peculiar to believers as many unbelievers possess more wealth. Abu Dharr (May God be pleased with him) narrates that he entered a mosque in the company of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) and he told him: "O Abu Dharr! Lift up your head!" When he did, he saw a very well-dressed man. After a while he lifted his head again and his eyes fell on a man whose clothes were very old. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

هٰذَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ قِرَابِ الْأَرْضِ

"This person, in the sight of God, is better than the whole earth". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Ibn Hibban fi Sahiha* on the authority of Abu Dharr [May God be pleased with him])

This and all other similar traditions mentioned in previous books (chapters) on abstinence from worldliness, harms of worldliness, and harms of wealth, provide clear evidence of the lower status of the wealthy and honor of the poor. In consideration of these traditions, it cannot even be imagined from a Muslim [or anyone for that matter] to have self-righteousness and self-admiration on one's wealth. Instead, if a believer has wealth, such a one should have this fear that one may not be able to fulfill the rights and obligations of [having] wealth. One who has this type of self-righteousness and self-admiration, his or her wealth is nothing but humiliation for oneself.

Eighth Cause: Is that one expresses self-righteousness and self-admiration on one's wrong opinions. God says:

يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ صُنْعًا

"These people are in this thought (wrong conjecture) that they have been doing good things [although, they are not]." (Qur'an, Chapter 18, Verse 104)

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said [the following] about self-righteousness and self-admiration for one's opinions: "Towards the end [of time,] for this nation (last phase of world before the Day of Judgment), the tendency of people having self-righteousness and self-admiration on their opinions [no matter how wrong they are,] will become dominant. Previous nations got destroyed because of this tendency that they got involved into [sectarian] groupings, every nation (*Ummah*) got divided up into many sects, every sect used to think that its beliefs are correct". (This tradition is alluding to a tradition in *Hadith* collections *Abu Dawud* and *Tirmidhi* on the authority of Abu Tha'laba [May God be pleased with him])

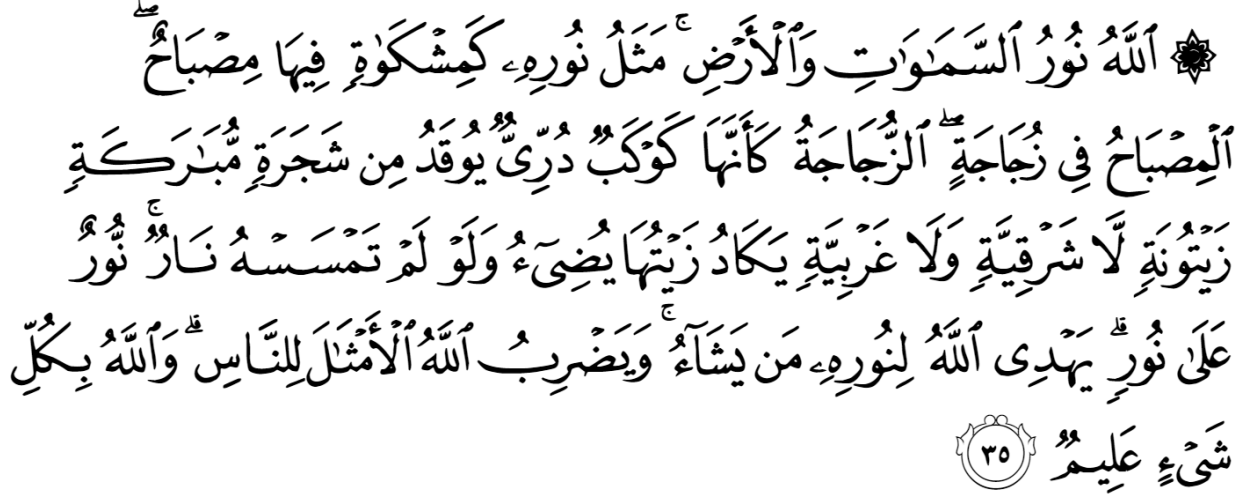
All people of innovation in religious matters (*Bid'a*) and misguidance (*Dalala*) are insistent on these [two] things because they have self-righteousness and self-admiration on their opinions [and this arrogance led to sectarian divisions]. The meaning of self-righteousness and self-admiration (*'Ujub*) on innovation in religious matters (*Bid'a*) is that one considers that action as better, that has been engendered by one's desire [from the lower base self] and in one's thought, considers it right. The cure for this type of self-righteousness is very difficult because a person with wrong opinions cannot become familiar with one's mistakes and that illness cannot be cured with whom one is not familiar with. Ignorance is a disease that has not been understood. However, a Gnostic (a knower of God) can inform an ignoramus of his or her mistake and could become a source of removal of this disease, but if that ignoramus is proud of one's ignorance, then what could that Gnostic do? One who does not even pay attention to the Gnostic, whose talk one can listen to and eradiate one's disease with, goes quite the opposite way and blames the Gnostic. God has imposed a calamity on one [that one is proud of one's wrong opinions and] that is destructive, but one is pleased with thinking of that as a blessing. It is apparent that cure for such a disease is not even possible. How can one abhor something that one considers a source of distinction for oneself? Its high-level cure is to always consider one's opinions as doubtful, in other words, think that one's opinion could be wrong and not depend on (trust) the veracity of one's opinions.

One who cannot devote every moment of one's life for education and educating, does not need to get entangled in religious questions (*Masa-il* or juristic positions on various legal matters). One should only have the belief in God's Oneness and that He has no partner, none is like Him, Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) is truthfully His prophet and what he has brought [in terms of Divine guidance for the entire humanity] is truth. Furthermore, one should act on the method of pious predecessors [who are inheritors of the prophets], accept the injunctions of Qur'an and the prophetic way without debates and argumentations, and without questioning, adopt pious awe, reverence and fear of God [to desist from anything that is harmful or injurious to oneself and to others], stay away from sins, and indulge in good righteous deeds [for the benefit of oneself and of others]. If one indulges in religious debates despite one's lack of [deep perceptive] knowledge and does not protect oneself from the prejudice of beliefs and pollution of innovation (*Bid'a* or new things in religious matters that violate the established principles) and misguidance (*Dalala*), one will get destroyed (spiritually speaking that has profound implications for one's material existence as well)

imperceptibly. The responsibilities of people dedicated entirely to knowledge are no less. Firstly, they should gain familiarity with arguments and conditions. The stage of gaining this familiarity is so detailed oriented that sometimes knowing the truth, becomes difficult [as there are subtleties in the path of truth that take a lifetime of persistent efforts to fathom]. Only those people reach the shores of this fathomless ocean who are firmly ingrained in knowledge and who possess the light of the Divine illumination of knowledge [that enlightens their inner souls and remove all the darkness within]. There are very few people like that. Most people have adopted the outer appearance of scholars but in their inner being, ignorance reigns supreme.

Condemnation of Pride and Heedlessness

Being vigilant and alert [against all incursions of evil within one's soul] is a cause of eternal happiness and endless success for a human being, and being immersed in pride and heedlessness (negligence and obliviousness to the true purpose of life and to the incursions of evil that eventually submerges the inner being in complete darkness) is a cause of eternal sorrow and damnation. For a slave of God (human being), there is no blessing greater than the faith and Gnosis (*Ma'rifa* or closeness and intimacy with God), and the means of attaining this blessing is the expansion of the heart (*Sharah Sadr*) [that happens by means of inner illumination that in turn is a result of spiritual struggle to purify the inner being]. Opposite to that, there is nothing worse than disbelief and transgression (sin or exceeding the limits of God) and this evil only becomes the destiny of those people who are submerged in the murkiness of ignorance and darkness of the heart. The example of the hearts of people of insight (inner illumination) is like:



"God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp, the lamp is within glass, the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow even if untouched by fire. Light upon light. God guides to His light whom He wills. And God presents examples for the people, and God is Knowing of all things." (Qur'an, Chapter 24 [The Light], Verse 35)

The state of the hearts of people of heedlessness is clarified in this verse:

أَوْ كَظُلُمَٰتٍ فِي بَحْرٍ لُّجِّيٍّ يَغْشَىٰهُ مَوْجٌ مِّن فَوْقِهِۦ مَوْجٌ مِّن فَوْقِهِۦ سَحَابٌ ۚ ظُلُمَٰتٌۢ بَعْضُهَا فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ إِذَآ أَخْرَجَ يَدَهُۥ لَمْ يَكَدْ يَرَىٰهَا ۗ وَمَن لَّمْ يَجْعَلِ ٱللَّهُ لَهُۥ نُورًا فَمَا لَهُۥ مِن نُّورٍ ﴿٤٠﴾

“Or [they are] like darkness within an unfathomable sea which is covered by waves, upon which are waves, over which are clouds of darkness, some of them upon others. When one puts out the hand [therein], one can hardly see it. And one to whom God has not granted light - there is no light (inner illumination of the heart and the soul) for such a one.” (Qur’an, Chapter 24 [The Light], Verse 40)

People of insight [and foresight who possess deep inner perception of all matters due to a mystic eye] are those whom God bestows guidance upon, and opens the doors of their hearts for state of submission to Him. The people of heedlessness (negligence and obliviousness to the true purpose of life and eternal truths) are those whom God intends to misguide [due to the darkness within their own souls that they themselves willfully chose to harbor, cherish and nurture to their own detriment] and make their hearts constricted for truth and guidance [to the Divine light]. They are those unfortunate people for whom the door of insight does not open, instead they consider their own desires from the lower base self (*Nafs*) and Satanic contemplations and thoughts as their guide and leader.

Why is the Condemnation of Pride and Heedlessness Necessary? It is because pride and heedlessness are the origin of all eternal sorrows and damnations and fountainhead of all destructions. That’s why, the explanation of the paths that provide an opportunity for pride to enter in and to detail the situations where there is plenty of pride, is necessary so that the seeker [on the path of truth leading to the Divine Gnosis] can find those paths, so one can prevent the lower self (*Nafs*) from walking on them. We will shed light on the heedlessness of every group of people. Even though these types are many, we will mention them as examples so that we can get warnings on other types like them. There are many groups [of people] who are indulged in pride and heedlessness. However, four groups are representatives of all the groups. They are scholars, abstinent from worldliness, spiritual travelers, and the elite (wealthy, powerful and influential).

It is Possible to Avoid Mistakes and Delusions: People of courage, traverse every difficulty of the [spiritual] path and if one has the correct intention, one finds out about the hidden impediments of the path and finds strategies to overcome them. If a human being wants, one can bring down a bird flying in the open skies, even though they are miles apart. Similarly, if one wants to get fish out from the depth of the sea then one can do that, one can dig the mountain to extract gold, silver and other precious metals, one can cage wild beasts from the jungle, one can overcome lions, elephants and other

ferocious beasts, one can control snakes and pythons and can extract poison out of their mouths, one can make silk out of leaves of the mulberry tree, one can find the number of stars and their length and breadth through numeric knowledge while standing on earth. Human being is a reservoir of strategies. There is no such difficulty that cannot be resolved by human strategy and there is no creation in the world that human being cannot subjugate with the strategy and use it for own purposes. Human being uses horse for riding, dog for hunting, hawk for preying on birds, net for catching fish, and likewise there are innumerable strategies like that are witnessed in this world at every moment. All these strategies are employed so that aims and objectives can be fulfilled. When human being employs variegated methods and strategies for [attaining] worldly objectives, can one not do the same for the reformation of the heart [which is the undisputed ruler of the human existence]? It's just human superstition, nothing is difficult or impossible, only condition is courage. Innumerable people have passed away who had set their feet in the thorny pathway of spiritual struggle and did not step back. They did not consider the reformation of the heart as impossible or inconceivable and did not get defeated by it. These are the ones who were termed "pious predecessors" (*Salaf al-Saliheen*). Then there are their followers and disciples who followed in their footsteps with truthful hearts and they also remained successful. Even now, those who with firm determination, solid intentions, and complete courage, traverse this thorny valley without getting discouraged [by the enormity of the task], will be successful. What's regrettable is that the amount of strategies and planning people employ for their worldly tasks and the amount of courage and determination they display for that, they do not even use the tenth part of it in tasks related to the Hereafter [showing their negligence and obliviousness to the real purpose of their worldly lives and to their impending eternal lives].

Three Things are Necessary to Avoid Mistakes and Delusions: If human beings want to avoid mistakes and delusions, they should necessarily possess three things: intellect, knowledge and Gnosis (*Ma'rifa* or deep insight, clarity of vision, removal of all doubts and obscurities that comes with Divine proximity and intimacy). Intellect refers to the original light and innate pristine human nature [not mired in turbidity and muddiness, that was Divinely created in its original form like that,] through which human beings perceive the reality of things. Intelligence and sharpness are also related to the human nature and foolishness and denseness are also related to the original nature. A dense person cannot remain protected from delusions. Hence, it is necessary for a human being to be intelligent and sharp by nature. If an individual is not on the nature of intelligence, its acquisition will be impossible except when original intellect is present. In that case, intellect can be increased and sharpened with experience. It is known from this that the basis of all [states of] eternal happiness and endless success is on intellect and intelligence. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

تَبَارَكَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْ قَسَّمَ الْعَقْلَ بَيْنَ عِبَادِهٖ اُشْتَانًا اَنَّ الرَّجُلَيْنِ يَسْتَوِيْ
عَمَلُهُمَا وَبِرُّهُمَا وَصَوْمُهُمَا وَصَلَاتُهُمَا وَلٰكِنَّهُمَا يَتَفَاوَتَانِ فِي الْعَقْلِ كَالدُّرَّةِ
فِيْ جَنْبِ اَحَدٍ وَمَا قَسَّمَ اللّٰهُ لِخَلْقِهٖ حَظًّا هُوَ اَفْضَلُ مِنَ الْعَقْلِ وَالْيَقِيْنِ

"Blessed is the Being of God who distributed intellect among His servants in a variegated way. Two persons are equal in their deeds - their pious deeds, fasting, prayers are all equal, but they are [still] very different in intellect like a particle next to Mount Uhud (i.e., there is a world of difference in their intellects like comparing a particle with a huge mountain). God has not created a blessing greater than intellect and certitude [in eternal verities and all matters of truth]". (This tradition is narrated by Tawus and reported by Hakeem Tirmidhi in *Nawadir al-Usul*)

Intelligence, understanding, inherent intellect are all great blessings of God. If this [Divine] blessing is not bestowed [upon one] and instead, if foolishness and imbecility is placed in the inherent nature [of human beings], then there is no mitigation of that. The second thing to protect against mistakes and delusions is Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*). Gnosis refers to knowing four matters: knowing the self (*Nafs*), knowing God, knowing [the reality of] the world (*Dunya*), and knowing the Hereafter (*Akhirah*) [as explained in Part 1 of this book]. Knowing the self means confessing to one's servanthood [to God] and one's inherent incapacity and helplessness [in the overall scheme of things governed by Divine decree]. Furthermore, one should know that, "I am a traveler in this world [towards the final destination of eternal life in the Divine Presence] and these lusts [from the lower self] have no compatibility with my temperament. Suitable to my temperament is only God's Gnosis and Divine vision". One does not get to know this reality until a servant [of God, i.e., a human being] develops a deep inner understanding of one's self and of one's Lord. How to achieve this Gnosis? In this respect, you should refer to the topics discussed in detail in the chapters on "Mysteries of the Soul" (Chapter 1) and "Divine Gratitude" (Chapter 12). In these chapters, we have alluded to the lower self and its traits that provide sufficient guidance into this matter. The stage of perfection (*Kamal*) of Gnosis comes after that. It is related to the knowledge of spiritual unveilings (*'Ilm al-Mukashafa*) which is not the topic of this book (The esoteric knowledge of spiritual unveilings is covered by other great spiritual masters like Rumi and Ibn al-Arabi. Ghazali has focused mainly on practical spirituality that ordinary people can work on that lead one to inner spiritual purification and transformation. That in turn could lead one to spiritual unveilings of eternal truths owing to the sincerity of the inner quest of the spiritual traveler and Divine largesse that is indispensable to make it even possible).

For knowing the reality of the world and the Hereafter, one should seek help from chapters on "Abstinence from Worldliness" (Chapter 14) and "Contemplating one's own Mortality" (Chapter 20) so that it is known (learned) that world has no comparison with the Hereafter. When one attains a deeper understanding of all four matters, chances will become brighter for safeguarding against delusions and mistakes. Divine Gnosis will stir and propel the Divine love [in the heart and in the innermost recesses of the soul], knowing the Hereafter will incline one towards it (the Hereafter), and knowing the world (worldliness) will cause revulsion towards it. One will consider that deed as the greatest that propels one to God and be profitable in the Hereafter. When this intention dominates the heart, the intention will be right in all matters. In taking care of all human necessities, eating food, dressing up, etc., the intention would be to seek help from them in traversing the spiritual path towards the Hereafter. All delusions will be removed by means of the health of intention, because delusions and mistakes are born

out of one finding attraction in one's ulterior motives to and having inclination towards wealth, fame and honor that debilitates the intention [and resolve]. Until one prefers world over Hereafter and supersedes one's desires over [what's needed for] Divine approval, one will remain entrapped by this delusion.

How to Traverse the Spiritual Path? One attains the knowledge and understanding of the lower self (*Nafs*) and of the Creator of the self (God) by means of one's intellect. This understanding brings about the domination of Divine love on the heart that gives rise to needing a third thing which is knowing how to traverse the spiritual path - what are those actions that cause one to either draw close to or remote from God? Furthermore, what are the obstacles in the path of the Hereafter, how many are the arduous stages that one has to go through, what is the way of removing those obstacles, and how to overcome these difficult stages? All these questions have been answered in [Ghazali's masterpiece book] "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God". The conditions of Divine worship can be found in the chapters about worship [that are in first volume or quarter of the book "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God" that are not included in this compilation] and one should adhere to them, study the harms of not doing them right [with sincerity of heart to attain Divine acceptance and proximity] and avoid them. In the chapters on [social and public] dealings [that are in second volume or quarter of the book "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God" that are also not included in this compilation], one should study the legal matters related to [earning a living and] economics. Things that are necessary, one should acquire them in the light of the Divine law and things that are unnecessary, one should refrain from them in accordance with the method prescribed in the Divine law. In the chapters on inner destructive qualities [that are in third volume or quarter of the book "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God" that are all included with brevity in this compilation in Part II], one should acquire knowledge of all the obstacles that stop one from traversing the path to God. The impediments of attaining to the Divine presence are condemnable (negative, evil, and destructive) inner traits, qualities, temperaments, inclinations, and dispositions. That's why, one should recognize them and find out about their cure [that are also compiled with brevity in this compilation but can be found in their entirety in the original book by Ghazali]. From the chapters on inner constructive and resilient qualities [that are in fourth volume or quarter of the book "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God" that are all included with brevity in this compilation in Part III], one should learn the knowledge of positive inner praiseworthy traits, qualities, temperaments, inclinations and dispositions. It is because when a condemnable quality is erased from the heart, it is necessary to replace it with a good praiseworthy inner quality. When one knows all these things, it can be hoped that one will be able to protect oneself against all types of mistakes and delusions that we have mentioned [in the book "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God"]. Here the truth of the matter is that the love of God should dominate the heart of the spiritual traveler (*Salik*) and there should not be a slightest bit of inclination towards the world (worldliness), one's will should be strong [to reach the final goal of attaining Divine acceptance, proximity and presence that results in resilience, positivity, optimism, inner peace, eternal happiness, and everlasting success], intention should be healthy (firm) and this will happen when one knows what we have written [here].

Part 3: The Inner Constructive and Resilient Traits - Positive Inner Qualities Inculcating Resilience, Positivity, Optimism, Inner Peace, Happiness, Eternal Bliss, and Endless Success Ushering Everlasting Individual and Collective Human Success

A source of immense good is to have positive inner qualities, dispositions, and propensities that in turn imbue a positive outlook on life and exude positive energy to do positive, constructive, and beneficial things in life. After taking a deeper look at negative inner traits in the previous eight chapters, with a view of ridding ourselves of them, it is time now to look at positive inner qualities that transform an individual and entire nations – qualities that Ghazali refers to in the initial explanation as "alchemy of eternal bliss" or transformative agent of change for turning one's life around for the better and transforming it into an epitome of goodness. The ten chapters or books, as referred to by Ghazali, in the fourth and final volume of Ghazali's "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God", expound on these positive inner qualities that are needed for individual and collective revival and transformation. These highly instructive ten chapters are presented in condensed form as follows.

Chapter 11 – Realizing One's Own Faults, Wrongdoings and Excesses and Seeking Repentance, Forgiveness and Making Amends for Committed Wrongs

Ghazali's first book in the fourth volume or quarter of his *magnum opus* "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God" deals with realization of one's own faults, shortcomings, wrongdoing and excesses committed against fellow human beings, and seeking repentance and making amends for one's wrongs committed against them and first and foremost, against one's own self. Wrongs committed against others are damaging to one's own heart and soul as they strip one of any spirituality and weigh heavily on one's own self. Perseverance in wrongs against one's own self and others, makes one desensitized and inured to them, paving the path for one's own eventual destruction and death of the inner conscious. They weigh heavily deep within, depriving one of inner peace and tranquility. The cosmos we are in, is marked with cause and effect and every action begets consequences, favorable or unfavorable, commensurate with the immensity of the positivity and negativity of our actions. Hence, realization of one's own wrongs and how it impacts oneself and others is imperative for one's own wellbeing at every level of existence – emotional, psychological, mental, and spiritual. Ghazali takes a deeper look at this first step towards reforming oneself that is presented here in condensed form as follows [17]:

Repenting from the sins and turning towards the Knower of the unseen and Concealer of the faults (God) is the very first step in the spiritual path and is a precious commodity of the arrivers at the [final] destination [of the spiritual path]. The spiritual travelers in the path of Divine Gnosis, firstly adopt the path of repentance. Repentance is the key to perseverance for those who have lost their way [to the real purpose of their lives due to immersion in the mundane routines of their lives and darkness within their inner beings, due to the indomitable sway of the lower base self]. The ones drawn near to the Divine presence, seek intimacy and closeness [with the Divine] by means of repentance. Prophets [of God] attain their eternal happiness and everlasting triumph (*Sa'adah*) through it, especially for our father [of the entire humankind] Adam (Peace and blessings of God be upon him), it became the means of salvation and [of the attainment of] higher degrees [in the spiritual path]. It is befitting for the offspring to follow [in the footsteps of] their forefathers [in all good that they have done before their demise from the sojourn of the earthly existence]. It's not surprising if someone commits any sin because one (everyone) is a descendent of the doer of mistake, Adam (Peace and blessings of God be upon him). But since the father atoned and expiated for his mistake by means of repentance [to God], it is imperative for the son [and daughter] to resemble the father in both matters. Adam (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)

made a mistake, but he shed tears of remorse and regret for a very long time. If any person considers him as one's leader only in making mistake and not follow him in repentance, then such is one is misguided, disobedient and rebellious [to God] and has no right to attribute oneself to one's father (Adam) and to claim to be his follower. Truth of the matter is that to become completely aligned with good and noble [and be wholly immersed in it], is the hallmark of angels [of God], and to be immersed completely in evil is the [perpetual] occupation of Satan.

Getting involved in or stumbling into evil and then [realizing one's folly and] turning to good is the work (nature or distinctive characteristics) of the human being, who has both qualities within one's nature - [both] the qualities of good and evil. It now depends [entirely] on oneself to either become a human being or get attributed to the devil (Satan). If an individual repents after committing sin, it will be said that one provided evidence for one's humanity. One who insists on rebellion [by acts of transgression by exceeding the bounds of human decency that jeopardize one's individual and/or collective well-being], it will be said about such a one that one wants to get oneself attributed to Satan. As far as the question of attributing oneself to angels is concerned, it is excluded from the circle of human possibility that one only does good deeds and not commit any sins. It is because in human composition [or in innate and primal human nature], there is such a firm admixing and amalgamation of both good and evil that there can only be separation between them either by means of the heat of regret or through the fire of hell. To purify the human essence (*Jauhar*) from Satan's guile and evil, it is imperative to immerse it in either one of the two heats. Now it is one's prerogative as to which heat one selects. Whichever heat one considers bearable, one should proceed to it, otherwise there will be no opportunity after death - over there, one's abode will either be in Heaven or Hell. Repentance holds a very important status in the *Deen* (path to God). That's why, in the section of this book (Part III of present work and Volume 4 of Ghazali's "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God") about salvific qualities, it was important to mention it first so that the details of its reality, conditions, signs, causes, indications, fruits and outcomes, harms and impediments, details of the method of cure for the spiritual traveler, all become clear [for the spiritual traveler]. All these matters will be explained in four chapters (sections) as follows.

Reality and Definition of Repentance

Repentance is the name of three things that are found in this order: Firstly, knowledge; secondly, state [of being]; thirdly, [resulting] actions. In this, first is necessary for the second and second is necessary for the third. This sequence and ordering are in accordance with the Divine way in the seen or material (*Mulk*) and the unseen or spiritual (*Malakoot*) realms. All three will be explained as follows.

Knowledge is to know that sins have tremendous harms [inherently embedded] in them [by their very nature]. Their greatest harm is that sins become a veil between the

servant (human being) and the Beloved (God). When this reality dominates the heart that the human being will become deprived of [reaching and meeting with] the Beloved, then this realization causes pain because one cannot tolerate in any way, the separation from the Beloved. That's why, one expresses regret on the [sinful] action that emanated from one that became a veil between one (i.e., the lover) and one's Beloved. This regret is called shamefulness and that is the second thing of repentance which is the state [of being]. When this regret dominates the heart, it engenders another state which is called the intention to have a certain action. This action is related to all three periods of time (past, present and future) - with present so that one leaves the sins one used to commit before; with future in the sense that one resolves [firmly] to leave that sin (or negative, harmful, injurious, evil or morally reprehensible deed) in the future life to come, that will be an impediment in meeting with the Beloved; with past so that one expiates for the damage caused by the sin if it can be expiated.

The fountainhead of the state of intention and of action is the knowledge that can be referred to as faith (*Iman*) and certitude (*Yaqeen*). Faith is ascertainment of the reality that sin is a deadly poison and certitude is the firm ingraining of this ascertainment in the heart in such a way that no doubt is left. When the light of faith and certitude covers the horizon of the heart, the fire of regret, sorrow and shamefulness ignites because one sees in the illumination of this light, that one has become remote from the Beloved owing to a certain [sinful] action. Just like someone is in the dark when all of a sudden, the light of dawn appears, or clouds move away followed by sunrise and the beloved is suddenly seen who is on the verge of death. Seeing that, the fire of love ignites in the heart and its heat convinces one to surely employ some strategy [to save the beloved]. Similarly, when sins bring the destruction closer, the light of faith and certitude shows one the way out. In short, knowledge, shamefulness, and in the present and future, the combination of intention of abandonment of sins, atonement of past mistakes, and making amends, is called repentance (*Tauba*).

Meaning of Obligation of Repentance: One learns [at first] that necessary and obligatory is only that which is a means of attainment of eternal happiness and everlasting success (*Sa'adah*), and is a means of salvation from eternal destruction. It is because, deciding to do or to not do something, if not related to eternal bliss (*Sa'adah*) or eternal damnation (*Shaqawah*), has no meaning in terms of being an obligation. There is no use of indulging in things that are not related to our present and future objectives. It is learned from this that obligatory is only the thing that is a means of achievement of eternal happiness and everlasting success. This is when one knows the meaning of obligatory and also knows that there is no greater happiness and success on the Day of Judgment than the Divine vision. Furthermore, an individual who is deprived of this supreme achievement [of attaining the Divine vision], there is no doubt about that person's misfortune and failure. One who is deprived of the supreme achievement of Divine vision is someone who is a prisoner and hostage of the desires from the lower base self (*Nafs*) that will become a veil between oneself and God. Such a one will suffer from the fire of separation [from the Beloved which is a fire that burns deep within one's heart, not letting one have any peace due to the inner anguish and sorrow] and also from the fire of Hell. One learns [at that time] that a servant is remote

from meeting with God and from His vision, when one is involved in desires from the lower self, possesses attachment with the transient realm (world), and falls onto things that are imperative to avoid for one's salvation. An individual who is closer to [attaining] Divine vision is one who severs the relationship (attachment) of one's heart from glitter of this world and becomes wholly attentive towards God, attempts to develop attachment to God's remembrance, finds Gnosis of Divine Majesty and Beauty, in accordance with one's capacity and the love of God.

Such a one understands that just like deviation from God due to sins, causes one to be termed as a sinner, disobedient and a follower of Satan the accursed, for the same reasons, one will be entitled to veiling from meeting with the Divine and will be termed as someone who lost the way [to the truth]. After knowing about all these matters, one will not doubt this reality that for the sake of Divine intimacy, it is necessary to deviate from the path that casts one away from it. Deviation from the path of remoteness [to God], is not possible without these three things that are termed knowledge, shamefulness (regret or remorse), and determination. That's why, until it is known that sins are the reasons for remoteness from the Beloved, regret will not happen and one will not feel the pain of treading the path of remoteness, and until one travels on the path of [feeling the] pain [of separation from the Beloved], one will not even imagine the return [to the path of Divine intimacy]. Return [to the path of the Beloved] means (entails) determination to abandon sins. It is known from this that these three means (knowledge, shamefulness, and determination) are needed to reach the Beloved.

When does Intellect becomes Perfected? The reality of intellect is not perfected until lust, anger, and all reprehensible inner qualities, that Satan employs as means to misguide human beings, are curtailed to perfection. Human intellect is completed at the age of forty, but the origin of intellect is completed when one reaches puberty. Its indications start to appear at the age of seven. Lusts are the armies of Satan and intellect is the army of angels. When these two armies gather at a place, they clash [with each other] until one [army] is unable to hold its ground in front of the other. Both are opposites of each other. Just like day and night, light and darkness do not gather together - if one dominates, the other's existence does not remain in any shape or form. Since lusts become dominant over a human being in childhood and youth, prior to the perfection of intellect, that's why, the feet of Satan become firm beforehand [at an early stage of human life]. That is the reason, why heart is usually subjugated by the love and attachment of lusts and getting rid of it becomes very difficult. Later on, when intellect appears, which is the party and army of God and is salvific for friends of God (Gnostics), it gradually delivers them from the hands of the enemies of God. That's why, if intellect does not have the strength and perfection, Satan will do its job [that he is determined to do] and will be the winner of this battle:

لَأَحْتَنِكَنَّ ذُرِّيَّتَهُۥٓ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

"Except for a very few, I will subjugate [all of] his (Adam's) descendants (Satan telling God of his rebellious motives to destroy the children of Adam, i.e., the human race, when God granted him respite until the Day of Judgment, out of Divine wisdom, before getting cast away from the Divine Presence after refusing to bow down to Adam [Peace

and blessings of God be upon him] out of sheer arrogance, jealousy and egoism)." (Qur'an, Chapter 17, Verse 62)

When intellect becomes firm and complete, its first job is to break the stranglehold of lusts, relinquishing [old firmed up and bad] habits, and forcibly inclining the temperament towards Divine worship, handing over a crushing defeat to the Satanic armies. This is the meaning of repentance that human beings deviate from that path whose leader is Satan, whose guide is lusts, and instead, tread the path that brings one to God.

Lust Supersedes Intellect: In every human being, lust is there before the intellect is there. The dearness of intellect [to human temperaments] supersedes the dearness of lusts. That's why, for every action that has been committed in following the lusts, it is necessary for every human being to repent from them - whether one is a prophet or a commoner. One should not think that repentance was a peculiar characteristic of Adam (Peace be upon him) only, instead, it's an eternal commandment written upon everyone from the human race. To suppose anything against it, is not even possible until the Divine way changes.

If an individual was on disbelief or on ignorance during adulthood, it is incumbent upon one to repent from that. If an individual happens to be a Muslim because of one's parents and does not know the reality of Islam (path of peace and submission to the Divine will for one's own spiritual renewal and transformation), it is incumbent upon one to repent from one's ignorance and negligence. This repentance will be in this manner that one [makes efforts so that one] understands the reality of Islam and knows that one will not benefit from parent's Islam until one is a Muslim oneself. When one knows this, it also becomes necessary to repent from attachment to lusts and love of heedlessness and to tread the right path [of moral rectitude and Divine guidance]. In other words, adherence to the limits of right conduct from the Divine law and fulfilment of mandatory obligations (*Fara-id* such as prayers, fasting, charity), whether it's in giving [to others] or taking [from others], doing something or not doing something, and this stage is the most difficult stage of repentance. Most people got destroyed at this stage as they were not able to repent despite desire [to do so]. It is proven from this that repentance is personally obligatory on every individual. [Since] No human being can remain oblivious to it, as determined prophets like Adam (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) could not [remain oblivious to it], how can others [who are far lower in spiritual attainment] do that?

Lust Causes Rust upon the Heart: Whatever lust one is involved in, it causes a type of darkness to cast upon the heart just like the darkness cast upon a mirror from the steam coming out of the mouth. If lusts are continuously followed, the darkness of the heart becomes deeper due to layer upon layer of darkness and it gets something like rust [on iron]. Imposition of rust upon the heart caused by lusts, is mentioned in Qur'an as follows:

كَلَّا ۖ بَلْ ۜ رَانَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِم مَّا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ

"Instead, rust has settled upon their hearts because of what they have done [in terms of their own evil sordid actions]." (Qur'an, Chapter 83, Verse 14)

If rust becomes deeper, it is construed as sealing (locking up) of the heart [so that no light of reason, inner peace, and spiritual illumination enters into it] similar to rust upon a mirror which, if left alone for a long time, no capacity remains in it for getting it polished, and such a mirror is declared as useless (a gone case as it cannot be restored back). Nevertheless, just like it is not enough for cleaning the mirror to prevent it from getting any additional rust, instead, it is also necessary to remove the rust it has already attained in the past. Similarly, it is not enough for the heart to just repent from following of the lusts in the future, but instead, sins that have been committed in the past should also be repented from [for atonement, expiation, making amends, correcting and reversing the wrongs as much as possible] so that the darkness of the past sins gets erased. Just like the heart darkens with sins, similarly, heart is brightened and illumined with righteous deeds. Divine obedience dispels the darkness of sins and the light spreads. This is the reality that has been alluded to in the following prophetic narration:

أَتْبِعِ السَّيِّئَةَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ تَمْحُهَا

"One should perform righteous deeds after sin; righteous deeds will erase that sin (this magnanimous concession does not apply to major sins like murder, theft, usurpation of other's legitimate rights, etc., as atonement and expiation is needed for them to attain Divine forgiveness as that itself is magnanimous Divine Mercy that no sin has been excluded from the circle of Divine forgiveness with appropriate expiation)". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Tirmidhi* on the authority of Abu Dharr [May God be pleased with him])

Acceptance of Repentance is Dependent on the Fulfillment of its Conditions

If you have understood the meaning of repentance, you should have no doubt in this matter that every correct repentance has [Divine] acceptance. Those people who see with the light of deep penetrating insight (*Baseerah*) and get benefited from the illuminations of the Qur'an, know that every sound heart [that is devoid of all blemishes and sordid inner states] is accepted before God. It will find pleasures and delights of God's proximity in the Hereafter and will have God's vision with one's everlasting eyes [that will be granted in the Hereafter to replace one's mortal eyes from the worldly existence]. They are also familiar with this reality that every heart in its origin, has been created sound [and is devoid of all blemishes and sordid inner states that it acquires later, as one progresses in worldly life and starts to deviate from the path of rectitude] as mentioned in prophetic narration that every child is born on '*Fitra*' (true innate intrinsic original nature of human being that is in total conformity with the Divine Will, Divine Reality and eternal universal truths and is predisposed towards the Divine trust that human being is distinctly endowed with, i.e., monotheism and Gnosis of God).

(This narration is reported by collection of prophetic narrations *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of prophetic companion Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him]).

The soundness of the heart gets eradicated due to the darkness of sins and dust of wrongdoings. They also know that the fire of shamefulness and regret, burns this dust into ashes [to restore the soundness of the heart]. The illumination of righteousness, dissipates the darkness of sins from the face of the heart. The darkness of sins, is not capable of withstanding the illumination of righteous deeds. Just like the darkness of night is not able to stay in front of the light of the day, just like filth does not stay in front of soap, just like an emperor does not like to select dirty clothes for oneself, similarly the Real Emperor (God) does not select filthy dirty hearts for intimacy and closeness to Himself. Then just like using (wearing) clothes for doing dirty things soils them and they do not get cleaned without getting washed with soap and hot water, similarly using the hearts in lusts makes them so soiled and dirty, that without the water of tears and regret, they do not get cleaned and purified. Every cleansed and purified heart in this manner is accepted and liked [in the Divine court] just like clean clothes are liked. Hence, purification [of the heart and soul] is incumbent upon you so that it attains to the honor of Divine acceptance in accordance with the Divinely ordained destiny. This acceptance is referred to as salvation in Qur'an:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَن زَكَّىٰهَا

"Certainly, one attained salvation who purified it (i.e., the soul)." (Qur'an, Chapter 91, Verse 9)

Let it be known that repentance means abandoning sins. Abandoning something is not possible until one develops an understanding of it. Since repentance is mandatory, that's why, the means through which repentance is attained is also mandatory. It is known from this that understanding the sins is mandatory. The meaning of sin is to oppose the Divine injunctions in doing something or not doing something. We will allude to some types of sins and their mutual connection. God alone is the grantor of ability to attain guidance by means of His mercy and largesse.

Types of Sins According to the Human Traits: Human being has countless traits and qualities as explained in the exposition of the mysteries of the soul (Chapter 1). However, those [human] traits and inner qualities that instigate sins [and wrongdoings] are divided into four types: Divine qualities, satanic qualities, bestial qualities, and animalistic qualities. The reason for that is the human composition is made up of various elements and every element wants its own influence within a human being. These four qualities show their own separate influences within a human being. For example, Divine qualities entail that one has arrogance, pride, forcefulness, desire for praise, wealth, honor, influence and power, and wants that one becomes superior to all creations (these qualities are only befitting for the Master and Creator of everything that exists) as the human existence calls out from the tongue of its state:

أَنَا۠ رَبُّكُمُ ٱلْأَعْلَىٰ

"I am your Lord, Supreme." (Qur'an, Chapter 79, Verse 24) (Some spiritual guides or saints and Gnostics, have said that there is no human being who does not have in one's inner being that which was proclaimed by Pharaoh that is mentioned in this above verse)

From this quality, such enormous sins are born that people don't even realize and count them among sins, even though they are extremely destructive and originate countless other sins. In third volume [of "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God" or Chapters 1-10 of this present work], these sins have been described in great detail. Second quality is Satanic that begets jealousy, rebellion, excuses, deception, fraud, disputes, and turmoil. On the basis of this very quality, human being commands [oneself and others] towards evil, hypocrisy, innovation and novelty (*Bid'a*) in religious matters [to bring about things that are not Divinely ordained, emanating primarily from one's ego and lower base self], dishonesty and other subversions [of one's inner being]. Third quality is animalistic that engenders innumerable wrongs such as greed, covetousness, lust of the stomach and private parts, theft, embezzlement in the properties of orphans, and desire to accumulate wealth for usage in endeavors non-compliant with the Divine law, etc. Fourth quality is bestial that also fosters innumerable repugnant matters such as anger, rancor, beating people, cursing people, murdering them, and destroying their possessions, and these sins branch out to other countless sins.

Natural Ordering of the Four [Human] Qualities: In terms of the birth, these four qualities are born [in a human being] gradually. First, animalistic qualities dominate, after that, bestial qualities dominate. Afterwards, both qualities combine to put the intellect on the path of fraud, deception, and excuses. At this point, Satanic qualities rise up and in the end the qualities of lordship (Divine qualities) rise up (Divine qualities belong only to God, the Exalted, and are totally unbefitting for a slave who should remain humble and lowly in the worldly life). In other words, human being starts intending to gain superiority and domination over all creations. Therefore, one expresses misplaced pride at every occasion, expresses superiority and arrogance, insults others to express one's honor and greatness, in short, the fountainhead and origin of all sins are these four qualities. Sins emanate from them and spread across [human] limbs and organs. Some sins get associated with the heart such as disbelief, innovation [in Divinely ordained matters] and hypocrisy. Some [sins] are related to eyes and ears such as rancor and jealousy, some are related to stomach and private parts, and some [sins] are committed by hands, feet, and other bodily organs. Since all of these sins are obvious, they do not need to be detailed.

Distribution of Enormous Sins: We know from the evidence of the Divine law and from the light of spiritual illumination [that is possessed by Gnostics and other spiritually enlightened individuals] that the purpose of all of Divine law is to bring the creations close to God and to get nurtured by the honor of [attaining] the Divine vision [with the eye of the soul]. However, to attain the distinction of God's closeness and vision, it is

imperative for a human being to attain an understanding of Divine Being and Attributes (qualities) from God's scriptures [in their original un-changed forms] and prophets. Qur'an alludes to this reality in following verse:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ ٱلْجِنَّ وَٱلْإِنسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

"I (i.e., God) have created *Jinns* and human beings only to worship Me." (Qur'an, Chapter 51, Verse 56)

In other words, the purpose of the creation of *Jinns* (supernatural invisible creatures that are present on earth) and humans is that they become servants of God. A servant does not truly become a servant [of God] until one develops a deep understanding of the lordship of one's Lord and of the servanthood [to God] of one's self (*Nafs*), and until one understands who the Lord is and what the self (*Nafs*) is. Prophets were sent for this very lofty purpose [to familiarize human beings with their Lord and to the reality of their self in terms of its servanthood to God and the duties and obligations it entails]. However, this purpose is not fulfilled after [the end of] this worldly life [as this lofty purpose needs to be attained in this very worldly existence as one's eternal life and eternal happiness and everlasting success therein, is dependent on that]. That's why, in a prophetic narration (Hadith of Prophet Muhammad [Peace and blessings of God be upon him]), world has been described as the farmland for the Hereafter [as the cultivation of this farmland, whether good or bad, is harvested in the Hereafter to the delight or chagrin of the tiller]. It is known from this that the objective of following the Divine injunctions is the protection of one's worldly life [so that one can live a wholesome life marked with inner peace, happiness and fulfilment] because worldly life is a means of one's path to God (*Deen*). In this world, the two things that are related to the Hereafter are wealth and self. In this way, there are three degrees [of human achievement in this ephemeral worldly life]: first is the degree of [attaining] knowledge and intimacy of God (*Ma'rifa* or Gnosis) [as this is the pinnacle and consummation of human achievement] which is protected in the hearts; second is the protection of the self that is related to the bodies [physical being of human beings]; third is the protection of wealth and material possessions that is related to the people [and their collective well-being in the form of commerce and economy needed for human civilizations to survive and flourish].

The classification of sins is also along the same lines. In other words, the biggest sin is that which closes the door of Divine Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*) [for the people]. After that, the biggest sin is that which makes people's lives difficult and constricted for them. After that, the biggest sin is that which closes the door of economy on the people. Nevertheless, there are three degrees [of good righteous actions]: protection of God's knowledge and intimacy in the hearts, protection of lives in the bodies, and protection of properties that are present with the servants of God (i.e., human beings) [to safeguard their economic interests and well-being]. All these three things are the objectives of the Divine law (*Shariah*). No nation [in this world that is characterized by its racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity] can be imagined, that will disagree with these [objectives]. It is because the intellect cannot even accept that God would send any prophet for the reformation of creations' matters related to their path to God (*Deen*) and

their world (worldly lives), and then command them to do things that would create obstacles in the way of knowing Him and His prophets, or destroy people's lives, or destroy their properties.

God's Gnosis is Excluded from the Realm of Senses: If you think that ascertainment of truth by means of the five senses, is restricted to the five senses, then what would be the difference between you and a donkey? Even a donkey perceives things by means of five senses. You (O human being!) are distinguished from a donkey because of a subtlety (i.e., the soul) within yourself [in its innate pristine form on which God originally created it in a state of '*Fitra*' - true innate intrinsic original nature of human being that is in total conformity with the Divine Will, Divine Reality, Divine Presence and eternal universal truths and is predisposed towards the Divine trust that human being is distinctly endowed with, i.e., monotheism and Gnosis of God]. It is the same subtlety that was presented to heavens, lands, and mountains first and they expressed their inability from taking responsibility of the burden that comes with this subtlety. This subtlety was then presented to the human being [who accepted it in the realm of souls, prior to its worldly sojourn]. This is explained in Qur'an as follows:

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا ٱلْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ وَٱلْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَن يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا ٱلْإِنسَٰنُ ۖ إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا ﴿٧٢﴾

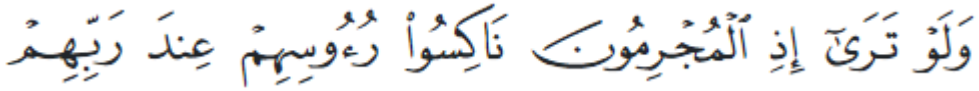
"We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and to the mountains, but they refused to carry it and were afraid of it; human being carried it who was surely unjust [for not fulfilling its rights] and ignorant [of what this trust entails]." (Qur'an, Chapter 33, Verse 72)]

This is the same subtlety that is capable of perceiving things that are excluded from the circle (realm) of senses. Animals and beasts do not have this subtlety [hence, they are incapable of attaining Gnosis or Divine knowledge and intimacy]. An individual who does not use this subtlety, wastes it and declares that the limit of knowledge and information is only what's perceived by the senses, and is included in the same [category of] animals and beasts [because such a person failed to rise up to what it means to be a human being, and failed to rise up to the true purpose of one's life, attainment of which, leads to eternal happiness and everlasting success].

O brethren in Islam! You [in particular] should not be like that [by acting in a reckless, heedless and hedonistic manner]! A person who perceives things only with senses, forgets about God because the Being of God is not perceived through senses. One who forgets God, God [in turn,] makes one forget one's own self (*Nafs*) [and one consequently gets lost in the wilderness of this worldly existence and its material struggles and to one's own detriment, in terms of lack of inner peace and fulfilment, becomes utterly ignorant of and oblivious to the real purpose of one's life and consequent eternal happiness and endless success]. One is then not able to ascend to the "Supreme Horizon" (Divine Presence) and descends to the rank of animals [in the spiritual realm due to one's heedlessness and negligence] and becomes contented with

this [low] rank. Such a person is in fact, an embezzler in this Divine trust that has been bestowed upon one by God, a rejector (or refuser) of Divine blessings, and one who subjects oneself to Divine retribution. The state of such a person is worse than animals. Animals are absolved of everything at death, but a human being is not absolved [of the responsibility] even after death. Instead, the trust that has been [Divinely] bestowed upon human being, will need to be returned back to its Owner (God) because this [Divine] trust will pull itself towards Him and find its abode with Him alone. [The Divine trust, which is the subtlety that God has bestowed to every human being, which is the soul, needs to be returned back to its Owner (God) at the end of this worldly sojourn in its pristine form it originally had, but additionally endowed with the Gnosis it was tasked to acquire in the worldly life. It is the form in which it knows its Creator in a state of complete harmony, peace, and intimacy with the Beloved. Soul has been sent in this world to find its way back to its heavenly origins, back to its Creator. That will happen when the soul is purified of all forms of lowliness, evil, and negativities, acquired in the worldly life, through a valiant spiritual struggle to transform it back into its pristine sublime state endowed with Divine Gnosis.]

What is this [Divine] "Trust" Like? This trust is like the brilliant sun that rose from the horizon of eternity and has set in this mortal [human] body [to be rediscovered by human beings by searching for the truth and launching an unflinching struggle for purification of the soul to make it ascend into the Divine Presence]. When the system of this body will turn upside down [right before death], this sun will rise from the west (one of the greatest sign of the advent of the Day of Judgment is the rising of the sun from the west instead of the east) and will travel into the presence of its Creator and Fashioner, either in a state of darkness or increased in its brilliance and illumination. The brilliant sun will reach the court of its Lord without any veils. Even the sun enveloped in darkness will also reach [into the Divine Presence] because the Being of God is the final returning place of everything, but it will reach facing downward. Its direction will be facing downward towards the lowest strata of "*Asfalus Safileen*" (lowest of the low) instead of the zenith of the "*Aa'la 'Illiyeen*" (highest of the high referring to the pinnacle of human achievement) [as human being has the moral and spiritual responsibility to expunge oneself from the state of being lowest of the low and instead, ascend [spiritually] towards highest of the high]. Qur'an says:



"When you look, you will see a strange state. These criminals will have their heads bowed down before God." (Qur'an, Chapter 32, Verse 12)

This Divine verse proves that on the Day of Judgment, sinners will also be present in the Divine court but not like obedient slaves of God, instead their faces will be turned backwards, and instead of being inclined to ascend upwards [in spiritual ranks and in consequent Divine proximity], they will be inclined to descend downwards towards earth [commensurate with their downward trajectory in worldly life in terms of running after their lusts and desires of the lower base self that manifests itself in stubborn wrong-headed follies]. A servant will have no power over it [as this will be the Divine recompense of what they did during their earthly existence]. One who is deprived of

Divine enablement to do good (*Tawfeeq*), will have the Divine commandment implemented on one in a way that one will not be able to forge ahead on the path of Divine guidance. Instead, one will go astray and will wander in the valleys of misguidance. We seek God's refuge from misguidance and also from being counted among the ranks of ignorant.

Attainers of Salvation (Real Success): These are the ones who attained Divine knowledge and intimacy (Gnosis). They are the "foremost of the foremost" (*Muqarrabeen al-Sabiqeen* or spiritual elites who are the topmost achievers from the human race, as they reached the pinnacle of human achievement, embarking on a life of eternal happiness and everlasting triumph). Those who followed in the footsteps of the righteous (*Muqalladeen*) without excelling in the path of righteousness like Gnostics did, will also be successful [although they did not reach the spiritual rank of the topmost achievers] but they will be termed as the "people of the right hand" (*Ashaab al-Yameen*). The Divine recompense that will be granted to the "foremost of the foremost" will be beyond any description in words. It can just be said about that which is mentioned in Qur'an as an allegorical reference:

فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّآ أُخْفِىَ لَهُم مِّن قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ

"No soul knows the things that have been kept in secret [by God] for the coolness of the eyes [of those who excelled in righteousness and made God their sole objective in life]." (Qur'an, Chapter 32, Verse 17)

It has been stated in a "*Hadith Qudsi*" (traditions of Prophet Muhammad [Peace and blessings of God be upon him] in which he transmitted from God):

أَعْدَدْتُ لِعِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحِينَ مَا لَا عَيْنٌ رَأَتْ وَلَا أُذُنٌ سَمِعَتْ وَلَا خَطَرَ عَلَى قَلْبِ بَشَرٍ

"I have prepared for my righteous servant what no eyes have seen, no ears have heard, and not even the thought of them have occurred to any human heart".

Gnostics are the seekers of that very state that has not occurred to any human heart. They are not greedy for any heavenly spouse, fruits, milk, honey, wine, jewelry, raiment, and other heavenly things like that. Even if they have been granted these things, they will not be contented with them, instead they will be seeking after the pleasure of the Divine vision which is the culmination of eternal bliss and endless triumph (*Sa'ada*) and the apex of delight and pleasure. Rabi'a al-Basri (May God have mercy upon her - who was the foremost of all women saints and Gnostics) was asked by someone, "What you would be inclined towards or desire in the Heaven?" She replied, "First the Owner of the abode and then the abode". These were the people whose love for the Owner of the [heavenly] abode (i.e., God) made them oblivious to the love of the abode (i.e., Paradise), instead, it made them oblivious to everything except Him to the extent that they became oblivious to their own beings. Their parable is like that of a lover who desired to see the countenance of the beloved, and is so engrossed in it that one did not have any other care, thought, and desire in the heart, not even for one's own self. Instead, one becomes oblivious to everything including every injury of the body, to wait

for the lifting of the veil from the countenance of the beloved. This state is called "annihilation in love" (*Fana fi al-Hubb*). In other words, one has become so immersed in the love of one's Beloved that one does not even see anything except the Beloved. The focus of all of one's thoughts and imaginations, is just one single focus. One does not even have any room left in one's heart and mind for anyone else. When one has that [inner spiritual] state in God's remembrance, one is bestowed with such [outpouring of] endowments [from Divine beneficence and generosity] in the Hereafter, that even the thought of them have not occurred to any human heart. Just like a deaf and blind person does not know the form of color and nature of sound, but if the veils of eyes and ears are lifted up, one would then know the form and nature of color and sound and would then know what one could not even have imagined in one's heart [before that day when veils are lifted]. This world is also a veil. Many such things will be revealed when it will be lifted up, that could not even be possibly imagined in the worldly life. One will then attain the pleasure of the pure and beautiful life and then the subject matter of this verse will become clear:

وَإِنَّ ٱلدَّارَ ٱلْأَخِرَةَ لَهِىَ ٱلْحَيَوَانُ ۚ لَوْ كَانُوا۟ يَعْلَمُونَ

"And only the life of the Hereafter is enduring and everlasting, if they but knew." (Qur'an, Chapter 29, Verse 64)

How Does a Minor Sin Becomes Major?

It should be known that minor sins become major sins due to following reasons:

First Reason - Insistence and Persistence: First reason is that one insists and persists on a minor sin. That's why, this famous proverb says, "No sin remains minor with insistence and no sin remains major with repentance [that includes seeking forgiveness, atonement and making amends]". The upshot of this proverb is that if any person stops after committing a major sin and refrain from committing another major sin, then there is hope that one's sin will be forgiven. Contrary to that, the matter related to a minor sin is tough, on which there is persistence [and perseverance]. The similitude of this is like of a rock on which water drips drop by drop [over a long period of time causing a mark or even a hole on the rock as a result of this persistent dripping]. Hence, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

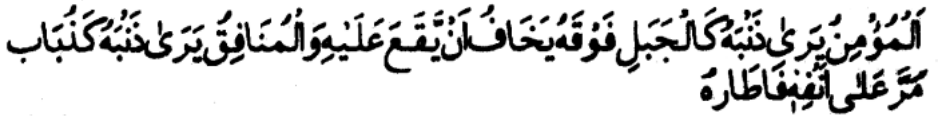
خَيْرُ الْأُمُوْرِ أَدْوَمُهَا وَإِنْ قَلَّ

"Best matters are the ones that are conducted with persistence and perseverance even though they may be small in number". (Narrated by *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Aisha [May God be pleased with her])

It is because things are recognized [and their importance is appreciated] by their opposites [such as light is appreciated because of darkness, good because of evil, knowledge because of ignorance, justice because of oppression, kindness because of

harshness, beauty because of ugliness, etc.] Hence, this prophetic tradition proves that a small amount of [righteous] deeds that are done persistently are more beneficial. It also proves that a lot of [righteous] deeds that are done at one time are not as much beneficial for the reformation of the self and purification of the heart [than doing that persistently over a large period of time, even though they may be small in number]. Similarly, if one is persistent in committing small sins, they become more potent [and lethal] in darkening the heart. This is true that one does not commit major sins unless one has committed minor sins before. For example, an adulterer does not commit adultery all of a sudden but first the intention to do so is there. Similarly, a murderer does not commit murder all of a sudden but first there is enmity and rancor. All major sins have this state that minor sins are found as a precursor to them. If we can suppose a major sin that came about all of a sudden without any minor sins as a precursor to it, then there is hope for its forgiveness compared to a minor sin on which one has persisted in all of one's life.

Second Reason – Considering Sin as Small and Insignificant: Second reason that cause minor sins to become major is that one considers one's sins as insignificant [and not worthy of any care or concern]. Every sin that a servant [of God, i.e., a human being] considers big in one's heart, becomes small near God and the sin that is considered insignificant, becomes big in the sight of God. That's why, considering sins as big means that one considers one's actions as wrong from one's heart and views them with revulsion. Therefore, because of this dis-likeness and revulsion [of sins and wrongdoings that one has committed], one does not accept a lot of effects of that sin. Contrary to that, considering a sin as insignificant means that one has love for and inclination towards sins. Consequently, one accepts a lot of effects from that sin. The objective [of every conscientious human being] is to illumine the heart by means of Divine obedience. It is [Divinely] forbidden to darken [and pollute] the heart with sins. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:



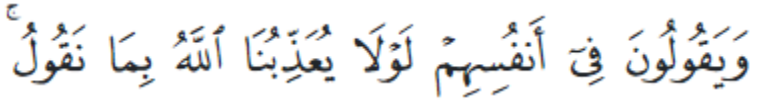
"A believer considers one's sin as a suspended mountain upon one's head that is about to fall, and a hypocrite does not give more importance to one's sin than a fly that flew past one's nose that one swiped at". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Sahih Bukhari* on the authority of Abdullah bin Mas'ud [May God be pleased with him])

A believer considers even a small sin as big. The reason for that is one's knowledge of God's magnificence, power, and ability. God revealed to one prophet, "Do not look at the paucity of the gift, instead look at the greatness of the One who has sent you the gift; do not consider your sin as insignificant, instead consider the greatness and magnificence of His Being whom you competed with, with your sin". Some companions (May God be pleased with them all) [of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)] have told their followers (*Taba'een*), "You do deeds that in your eyes are finer than hair (i.e., considered insignificant and not a cause to worry), although we considered them as fatal at the time of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)". The reason for that is the companions were well-aware of God's

majesty. Therefore, compared to Divine majesty, even the minor sins were not less than major sins in their eyes. That is the reason an ignoramus ignores something as small (unimportant) but a scholar (person of knowledge) considers the same thing as important. Some things that are ignored from the laymen, are not forgiven from a Gnostic.

Third Reason – Happiness with Committing Sins: Third reason that causes minor sins to become major is that one feels happy after committing sins, is proud of it and thinks that what one has done was due to the special favor and largesse of God. Furthermore, one is heedless of the fact that this deed was a shortcoming and a cause of Divine displeasure and of evil portent for the doer. Commensurate with finding pleasure in it, a minor sin become major and to that extent, its darkness permeates the heart. Some sinners (wrongdoers) are seen to be seeking praise for their sin (wrongdoing), expressing pride, and bragging about it. For example, one says, "Did you not see how I ruined him?" A debater or arguer says, "Did you see how I humiliated my opponent? I put him to shame by revealing his faults. He was humiliated in front of packed audience. Then I tricked him in the debate in such a way that he could not even have imagined". A trader says, "I fooled him by giving him counterfeit currency and caused him a big loss. It's such a pity that he got fooled and also suffered a loss". These and talks like them transform even minor sins into major. Sins are destructive. If one gets indulged in them, gets influenced by Satan, who ends up compelling one to commit sins and wrongdoings, then this is a place of sorrow and regret and not of happiness [and pride]. Have you seen someone who considers it one's greatness in getting subjugated by the enemy and is proud of one's defeat? Furthermore, can a conscientious human being be happy after doing these types of [evil] things that make the Beloved (God) unhappy? The similitude of such a person is like of a patient who is happy when the medicine bottle breaks. Is such a patient a candidate for recovery without medication?

Fourth Reason – Taking Support from Divine Commandment: Another reason that causes a minor sin to become major is to take support [or advantage] of God's veiling [of one's sins and wrongdoings to save one from getting publicly humiliated purely out of Divine benevolence], forbearance and relaxed leash and to not know that [taking advantage of God's] relaxed leash [by wrongly taking it as an encouragement to commit sins] is a cause of Divine displeasure. If one thinks that one's sin or wrongdoing is a symbol of Divine providence and mercy, then it is [tantamount to] one's ignorance, unawareness of the right place [and time] for expressing pride, and being daringly fearless of God's grip [and reach]. The parable of such people's temperament is expressed in the following verse:



"And they say this in the hearts, 'Why does He not punish us for saying this?'" (Qur'an, Chapter 58, Verse 8) [Such people think that since God's punishment for one's wrongdoings and sins is not immediately apparent and instant, it is a proof that nothing bad will happen to them no matter what they do. They take this as an encouragement

and a license to keep doing wrong things with impunity until they get finally caught, both in this world and in the next]

Fifth Reason – Expression and Announcement of Sin: One reason for a minor sin to become major is that one commits a sin then tells people what one has done or does it at a place where people are watching. One who does that, wants to shred the veil that God has put over one's sin [out of Divine mercy] and wants to incite people into committing the [same or similar] sin, who have been informed about it or one has committed that sin in their presence. In this case, one sin was there from before and two more got added up, that's why, this sin will become a major sin. If one provokes people into doing the same sin [or evil deed] besides expressing and revealing it, then it will be a fourth sin and it will become extremely fatal. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

كُلُّ النَّاسِ مُعَافًى إِلَّا الْمُجَاهِرِينَ وَإِنَّ مِنَ الْمُجَاهَرَةِ أَنْ يَعْمَلَ الرَّجُلُ بِاللَّيْلِ عَمَلًا ثُمَّ يُصْبِحَ وَقَدْ سَتَرَهُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ فَيَقُولَ يَا فُلَانُ عَمِلْتُ الْبَارِحَةَ كَذَا وَكَذَا وَقَدْ بَاتَ يَسْتُرُهُ رَبُّهُ وَيَبِيتُ يَسْتُرُ اللَّهَ عَنْهُ

"All people will be [Divinely] forgiven except for those who go around revealing their sins. One person lays down in bed after committing a sin and God hides that sin in the darkness of the night. But when it is morning, one reveals the sin that God has concealed and tells people about it". (Narrated by *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him])

The reason, that is included in God's Divine qualities and favors, is that He reveals good qualities [in people] and hides evil acts and does not reveal anyone's secrets. A person who exposes one's own faults [and sins] is like someone who is being ungrateful towards this Divine blessing and rejects this Divine quality in practice [by means of one's actions]. One Gnostic said, "Firstly, a servant [of God] should not even commit sins but if one does, one should not persuade others, otherwise, one will be committing two sins". This is the trait of hypocrites that they persuade each other to commit evil. Qur'an says:

ٱلْمُنَٰفِقُونَ وَٱلْمُنَٰفِقَٰتُ بَعْضُهُم مِّنۢ بَعْضٍ ۘ يَأْمُرُونَ بِٱلْمُنكَرِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ ٱلْمَعْرُوفِ

"Hypocrite men and hypocrite women, some [of them] command some others towards evil and stop [each other] from doing good deeds." (Qur'an, Chapter 9, Verse 67)

Sixth Reason – A Leader or a Prominent Person Committing a Sin: Some sins also become major because they have been committed by someone whom people follow in religious legal matters, because people follow what they do. For example, a religious scholar wearing silk, or riding on gold [plated] conveyances, taking dubious wealth from kings [or government officials or people with political power] or helping them by not making them realize their wrongdoings, and indulging in knowledge purely for the sake of prestige. These are the types of sins in which simple minded people follow them. Such scholars will die one day but their evil will continue to spread throughout the world [even after they are gone]. How fortunate is the person whose sins get buried with one [at the time of death]? The matter related to [religious] scholars (or leaders or trend setters whom people look up to and have a large following for that matter) is dangerous

as they have great responsibilities. When they do good deeds [or set good trends among people], there is an increase in their Divine rewards if anyone follows them in that. If a scholar abandoned worldly pomp and glitter and remained disgusted with it, remained contented with only the needed things, relied on the infinite Divine power, preferred old clothes for oneself, and people followed one in good habits, then one will not just get the Divine remuneration for one's own [good] deeds but everyone who followed one [in such good deeds], their reward will also be granted to one [without diminishing anything from the Divine recompense for the followers]. If one remained inclined towards worldly pomp and glitter, then people who are lower in [worldly and social] rank will try to resemble one in that, but they will not be able to succeed in that due to their financial conditions. They will be compelled to serve the kings [or politically or economically powerful people] and earn wealth from illegal sources to fulfil their desires. In this way, one will alone be declared as the raison d'être for all of their actions [of the followers in evil or harmful trends]. In both states, just like there is benefit from the being of a scholar [or leader or trend setter], there is also harm, and both of these have a visible impact.

How does the Darkness of Sins Gets Removed from the Heart? The darkness of sins (committed wrongs) gets removed from two things: first is the fire of regret and shamefulness; and second is the intensity of spiritual struggle [to abandon wrongs in the future]. [Both of these entail repentance]. There are many degrees of repentance. Their initial degrees are also replete with benefits. The later degrees are at an exalted level of excellence. Sahl bin Abdullah al-Tustari (May God have mercy upon him) said, "A slave (human being) is in need of one's Lord in every condition and state. It is better for one to turn to God in every state, whether it is good or bad. For example, if one is committing sin then one should pray, 'O God! Please put a veil over my sin'. When one is done with the sin then one should pray, 'O God! Forgive my wrongdoing'. After repenting, one should pray, 'Protect me from doing sin [again]'. If one does something good, one should pray, 'O God! Accept this work of mine'". Someone asked him, "Which repentance causes sins to be forgiven?" He replied, "The beginning of repentance is penitence [to God] then it is returning to Him then it is repentance. Penitence refers to actions of the bodily limbs, returning to God refers to actions of the heart, and repentance to God is to become oblivious to creations and become wholly attentive to God and to seek God's forgiveness for the sin one is indulged in, furthermore, seek forgiveness from faults like rejection of Divine blessings and abandonment of gratefulness to God. It is hoped that one will be forgiven after that and will find shelter with the Lord of all the Universes". There are stages even after repentance. First stage is solitude then perseverance then seeking knowledge then contemplation then entreaties [to God] then ascension [into Divine presence] then harmony [with the Divine] then secret talk [with the Divine]. But all of these states descend on the heart of the slave whose sustenance is [Divine] knowledge, maintenance is Divine remembrance, reliance is Divine approval, companion is trust [in God] - on a heart like that, God puts His special attention and lifts it to the Throne where it finds a place among the bearers of the Divine Throne. Someone asked him about the following saying of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him):

اَلتَّائِبُ حَبِيْبُ اللّٰهِ

"A repentant person is a beloved of God".

He replied, "A repentant person will be a beloved of God when following traits will be found in one:

اَلتَّآئِبُونَ اَلْعَابِدُونَ اَلْحَامِدُونَ اَلسَّآئِحُونَ

اَلرَّاكِعُونَ اَلسَّاجِدُونَ اَلْآمِرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ

وَالنَّاهُونَ عَنِ اَلْمُنكَرِ وَالْحَافِظُونَ لِحُدُودِ اَللَّهِ

They are the ones who do repentance, worship God, praise God, fast, bow down to God [in submission and adoration], prostrate to God, exhort people for good and noble, and dissuade them from doing evil, and protect God's limits (do not exceed the Divinely ordained bounds of morality, civility and decency)." (Qur'an, Chapter 9, Verse 112)

One is called "beloved" when one is so obedient to the one loved that one does not even come close to what is disliked by the one who is loved. The purpose of this explanation is that repentance has two benefits: first benefit is that the sin gets erased and one becomes as if one never committed a sin; second benefit is that one attains the degrees of Divine proximity to the extent that one becomes a beloved [of God]. Then the expiation and atonement of sins has different degrees - some sins are erased as if they never existed, some sins are reduced commensurate with repentance, but it has the same effect in the eradication of sins.

Ja'far al-Sadiq (May God have mercy upon him) said, "God has concealed four things in four other things - [Divine] approval in obedience [to Him], that's why, do not consider even a minor act of obedience as insignificant, it is possible that God's approval is hidden in that; [Divine] wrath in sins, that's why, do not consider even a minor sin as insignificant, it is possible, that very sin is a cause of Divine wrath; Gnosis in servants [of God], that's why, do not consider any servant (human being) as insignificant (lowly or contemptable), it is possible that one [who is being looked down upon] may be an intimate of God; [Divine] acceptance in supplication [to God], that's why, do not leave supplicating (praying) to God at any occasion, there may be [God's] acceptance in that".

Medicine of Repentance and Method of Curing Insistence on Sins

It should be known that people are of two types: one is that youth who does not have any inclination towards evil, who was raised up on good and noble, and staying away from evil is in the very temperament (nature or inner composition) of one. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

يُعْجِبُ رَبَّكَ مِنَ الشَّابِّ لَيْسَتْ لَهُ صَبْوَةٌ

"Your Lord is surprised at the youth who does not have inclination towards evil. But such people are rare". (Narrated by *Hadith* collections *Musnad Ahmed* and *Tabarani* on the authority of 'Utbah ibn 'Amir [May God be pleased with him])

Second type include those people who commit sins. They are further subdivided into two types: Those who repent and those who insist on sins. I would like to explain in this chapter, the cure for insisting on sins and which medicine is effective in eradicating this disease and imparting recovery.

It should be known with clarity that repentance is recovery and this recovery is attained by means of a medicine. In order to get familiar with the medicine, it is imperative that one is aware of the disease. Medicine means to go against the causes that have caused the existence of a disease. If one would like to cure a particular disease, the reason that engendered that disease should be eradicated. Additionally, it is also an established fact that everything becomes nullified by its opposite. If viewed in light of this principle, the cause of insistence on sins is heedlessness (negligence) and lust. The opposite of heedlessness is knowledge and the opposite of lust is that a human being remains patient on factors that instigate [passions and] lust. Negligence (or heedlessness) is the root of sins. The medicine that will be prepared for curing heedlessness will have the ingredients of sweetness of knowledge mixed with bitterness of patience.

Obligations of Religious Scholars: When a person committing a sin [realizes or] knows that one has committed sin then it is necessary for one to get cured at the hands of a scholar [a spiritual teacher who is knowledgeable about inner spiritual diseases and ailments that plague humanity]. If one does not recognize one's own disease, then a scholar should diagnose it for one. The way to make it happen is to have one scholar become responsible for one country, city, neighborhood, *Masjid* (a place of worshipping and glorifying God where people go to seek connection and relationship with God), or group of people and educates them about the path to God (*Deen*), explain to them things that are harmful to them, inform them about things that are [spiritually] beneficial to them, explain to them in detail the factors leading to *Sa'adah* (eternal happiness and endless success) and *Shaqawah* (eternal damnation and complete failure). A scholar should not wait for people to ask before guiding them, instead, a scholar should call on the people to come to one or visit them and guide them to the right path because scholars [and spiritual guides] are heirs of the prophets [after the end of the era of prophethood]. In guidance and education, it has always been the way of the [true] prophets [of God] to go around themselves, calling upon people, going to every home inviting them to the way of truth, going around finding each and every one admonishing them about the path to God (*Deen*). Usually, people are not familiar with the diseases of their hearts, that's why, scholars should themselves [take the initiative and] guide them. In matters related to outer [bodily] diseases, one can oneself contact the physician, for example, if one has vitiligo (a skin disease characterized by patches of unpigmented skin) or has marks on one's face then one can know the state of one's disease by looking into the mirror. But not everyone has the mirror and one will not

know of one's ailment until someone else tells one about it. This is personally obligatory (*Fard al-'Ayn*) on all scholars [to proactively help and guide people out of their spiritual ailments]. People are born ignorant, hence, it is imperative to reach out to people in matters related to the principles and details of the Divine path (*Deen*). World is like an abode of the sick - one who is under the [surface of] earth is dead and one who is on its surface is sick. Diseases of the hearts are more numerous than the diseases of the body, that's why, in the hospital of this world, patients of spiritual diseases outnumber patients of bodily diseases. Scholars [and spiritual guides] are doctors of this hospital and government officials are its organizers [and caretakers]. If any patient does not accept the suggestion of one's physician and does not take the medication prescribed [by the physician], [such a patient] should be handed over to the government authorities so that they save other people from their [infectious] sickness. Just like a patient not adhering to prevention either becomes mad or handed over to a jailer so they can imprison one and safeguard themselves and others from their [infectious] sickness.

Why Diseases of the Heart are more Numerous? Compared to bodily diseases, diseases of the hearts are more numerous. There are three reasons for that: First reason is that a patient does not know the disease one is infected with. Second reason is that the outcome of this (diseases of the heart) is not [generally] visible in this world, while the outcome of the bodily diseases is visible in this world, [sometimes] resulting in death. Hence, people are afraid of bodily diseases because they know that if they don't get themselves cured, death will make them disappear from the face of the earth. Outcome of the sins (diseases) of the heart is the death of the heart. However, one does not know about it in the world (worldly life), that's why, there is less hate against the sins. Even though, human beings know that one has sinned, one does not give much importance to one's sins and relies on God on matters related to seeking repentance and forgiveness. However, one does not rely on God for bodily diseases, instead, one runs around from one doctor to another. Third reason is the most important and foundational, rather it is itself an incurable disease and it is that the physicians of the hearts are [nearly] non-existent. People who can be contacted in these diseases are the religious scholars, but they themselves are infected with the worst [spiritual] diseases nowadays [as they themselves lack spiritual perfection and the resulting expertise in helping cure people of the spiritual ailments]. How can they cure others when they are unable to cure themselves? These [spiritual] diseases [of the heart] are rampant and rarely anyone is saved from them, that's why, this fault of scholars does not become evident and they (scholars) dissuade the creations [from the spiritual path] and tell them the types of things that increase this disease. The most destructive of these diseases is the love of the world (worldliness) and that predominates the physicians of the path to God (*Deen*). That is the reason, they suggest cure for others but themselves are indulged in this disease making it so widespread, rather, it is assuming epidemic proportions.

Paucity of doctors [of spiritual ailments] is causing creations to experience destruction. Those who should be doctors and curers are using variety of tactics to rob the simple-minded creations and misguide them through various ways. If they cannot do good for them then they should not be dishonest towards them, if they cannot bring about

reformation then at least they should not make them worse. Instead, it is better for them to stay quiet because whenever they open their mouths, their objective is to have more and more people come to them and that objective can be achieved only when they give false hopes of forgiveness to people, prefer the causes of hope in God (*Rija*), mention the arguments of Divine mercy, and deliberately avoid the mentioning of those traditions in which people have been made fearful of Divine punishment by mentioning of God's wrath [for wrongdoing and evil]. People find a lot of satisfaction in such sermons and these things pour sweetness in their ears and provide assets to the hearts. When people return from the gatherings of these so-called "scholars", their audacity to commit sins increases some more and their reliance on God's largesse increases some more. It is an established fact that if a doctor is ignorant and dishonest then one ends up giving a deadly medicine to one's patient that instead of imparting health, pushes the patient into the jaws of death. It is because, a patient is not given the medicine that is needed and is not given that medicine in the way that it should be given (administered).

Cure for Causes of Sins: Now the cure for the causes of sins (evils and wrongdoings) will be explained here. The cure for the first cause "punishment for sins is not immediate and is not visible to one" is to think that something that is bound to happen in future will happen [even though it is delayed and may not be seen during the worldly life] and that day is not far away, instead, it is very near to someone who has the eyes to see it. Furthermore, death is so close to a human being as the shoelaces [of shoes one is wearing]. It may be the case that the Day of Judgment is near [as death is the start of afterlife and of the journey to the Day of Judgment] and may be about to happen after a few moments. One should also think that human being by nature, works hard for the betterment of one's future, endures hardships, for example, travels by sea [on long, arduous journeys for trade, commerce, education, etc.], roams around in deserts in the hopes that the profit one will gain through these travels will help one in the future life. Not only that, if one fells ill and some physician who is not a believer, informs one that cold water is detrimental to one's health and even brings one closer to death, although cold water is very soothing to one, one does not even touch it. It is worth considering that one abandons a worldly delight [of drinking cold water to quench one's thirst] upon the advice of a non-believer. It may well be the case that the physician is good but there is no established miracle that the physician has the level of medical expertise to be right all the time. One the other hand, there are established miracles on the veracity of [true] prophets [of God]. One should think that one can believe a non-believer but cannot believe a [true] prophet [of God] for what they have brought [out in terms of Divine guidance for the betterment of humanity].

Second cause can be cured in a similar manner. If there is dominance of insistence on the pleasures of sins, one should deliberately abandon it and think that if one cannot leave the pleasures of the worldly life that is worth a few days then how can one leave the pleasures of the eternal life that lasts forever. If one cannot endure the pain [of avoiding the pleasure of sins] in this life that is worth a few days and cannot be patient with this little hardship, then how can one endure the pain of the Hell. Furthermore, when one cannot be patient with the worldly blessings [and pleasures] that are replete

with unpleasant aftermaths then how can one be patient with pure and clean blessings of the Hereafter.

Regarding the cure for the third cause, that is to prevaricate in doing repentance in the hope of acceptance of repentance [later after one has thoroughly enjoyed sins and reached advanced or old age in life], one should think that the very reason for the screaming of denizens of Hell would be this delay [in repentance]. This is because they will delay the repentance from sins that ends with one's death [as the time of death is unknown despite all life expectancy expectations, and people of all ages die for various causes], afterwards, there will be no opportunity left for repentance. It is possible that one may die before repentance and even if one gets to live, how does one know that one will be able to abandon sins while one is not able to do so now because the reason for not abandoning sins that exists today, may also exist later. It is even possible that habits become firm later by continuously doing wrong things. One who has not formed a habit, finds it easier to leave it behind if one wants to leave it, but if one has a settled [and well established] habit, one finds it difficult to leave it despite the desire. The example of a prevaricator is of someone who wants to remove a tree, but the tree is strong and could not be easily removed and one leaves doing that for doing it next year. One knows well that however long a tree stays, its roots expand and become stronger and as one advances in age, one becomes weaker. What could be a greater foolishness that when one is not able to remove a relatively weaker tree despite one's physical strength, how can one remove a stronger tree in one's weaker state?

The cure for the fourth cause, that is waiting for God's mercy and bounty, has been explained before. Its example is like that of someone who gives away all of one's wealth and possessions in charity, makes one's family destitute, and wait for God to send one sustenance from the unseen or grants one treasure at a [remote desolate] barren land. The chances of getting sins forgiven [without repentance, atonement and making amends] is like that of the chances of finding a treasure; or the similitude of such a person is like that of someone who leaves one's goods in the front yard while living in a city where things are looted in broad daylight, and says that one has trust in God who will protect one's goods [from getting looted], even though one is able to keep it at a safe place. In these examples, finding treasure or safeguarding one's goods from stealers is impossible. One who leaves the earning of livelihood due to such trust (or misplaced expectation) or carelessly puts one's goods like that [at an unsafe location], is a big fool. Similarly, forgiveness of one's sins is possible, but to keep doing sins on the expectation of forgiveness and to not repent [due to that expectation] is extreme ignorance.

The cure for the fifth cause, that is doubting the veracity of [true] prophets [of God] are those factors that prove the veracity and truthfulness of the prophets. The human being who is doubting will be told, "Prophets who had miracles that were proofs of them being on the truth, who informed us that there is a realm of the Hereafter that is separate from this realm (world or physical realm) and after death, one gets associated with that realm. Do you have certitude on the truth of this news or is it impossible like it is impossible for a person to be present in two places at the same time?" If one responds

that one finds it impossible [that prophets were upon the truth] then it is useless to argue with such a person. If one says that one has doubts about it, then one will be asked, "If a stranger informs you that when you left your home leaving behind prepared food, a snake put its mouth in your food and mixed it with its poison. If you believe in the veracity of this stranger, would you still eat that food or leave it, even though that might have been the tastiest of all foods?" One will respond to it, "I will not eat such a food, even if that stranger is lying, I will not eat it out of precaution. At the most, that food will be wasted [in case, the stranger is lying]. But if that stranger is telling the truth, then eating this food will be deadly for me". It will then be said to such a one, "You believe in an unknown stranger and throw away your food believing in this news, even though the stranger does not have any arguments or proofs, then there is this possibility that one may have said this in jealousy or said this to make you worried. On the other hand, there are sayings of prophets, that have been corroborated by miracles, there is consensus between saints, scholars, wise and intelligent, but you neither accept the saying of prophets nor accept the news conveyed by them. Ignorant among the masses are not the subject of this discussion, is there anyone from the intelligent who neither believes in the Day of Judgment nor is one convinced of reward and punishment? There can be differences on its appearance but there is unanimous consensus on its existence among all people of intellect. If their news is true then you hwould have reached close to such a [Divine] punishment that will endure forever, and even if they are telling a lie, you don't have a significant loss, the only loss you have is that you will not be able to achieve some pleasures of the world". If addressee has even a slightest bit of intellect, one will not delay the repentance for the slightest bit because no matter how long the worldly life is, it cannot be an equivalent of the eternal life. If we suppose [that the world is filled with grains] and a bird pilfers one grain after one million years then stops then pilfers another grain after one million years [and continues on in this way], even in that case, all the grains will be finished [one day] but there will be no reduction in the everlasting life. Hence, how can a person possessing intelligence shows laziness in attaining the eternal happiness and endless triumph of the everlasting life (*Sa'adah*) by being patient with pleasures of this [transient] life that is worth a few days? That's why, Ali (May God be pleased with him) told a man whose intellect was unable to investigate and perceive such matters, "If you are telling the truth [that there is no Hereafter and this life is all we have] then both you and I will be saved. But if I am telling the truth [about the existence of the Hereafter and its eternal life of either eternal happiness or eternal damnation] then you will get destroyed [in the Hereafter] but I will attain salvation". Nevertheless, an intelligent human being should tread the path of peace and precaution in all circumstances.

Chapter 12 – Resilience through Patience in the Face of Adversities, Trials and Tribulations, and Gratitude for Blessings and All the Good One Possesses

Ups and downs are indispensable part of one's life. Personal and collective tragedies, accidents, plagues, disasters, loss of loved ones, material losses, setbacks and challenges in life, illnesses, sorrows, hardships, wars, hunger, poverty, unemployment, turmoil, social disorder and unrest, despair, lack of inner and outer peace, anxieties, dangers, and anger on excesses committed by others, etc., are inevitable part of human experience in this worldly existence. All these unpleasant and discomforting situations may arise despite one's best efforts to prevent them. If one manages to stay in one's best behavior, others may not be able do the same thus resulting in anger, conflicts, and various other negative emotions and inner and outer human states. It's always easy to give in to such negativities and get broken-hearted, despaired and broken down by them, and become embroiled in negative emotions, anger, sorrow, desperation, and depression. The only tool to deal effectively at the onset of such unpleasant situations is to exercise patience and patient perseverance to one's utmost capacity. Virtues of patience are innumerable, resulting in immense good for individual and collective human wellbeing.

The mirror image of patience is gratitude which is counting one's blessings, even the ones that are taken for granted like food, air, breathing, health, prosperity, peace, security, happiness, having clothes to wear and a roof on one's head to protect oneself from extreme weather conditions, friendships, relations, family, and having one's mind, heart and intellect intact to name a few. Gratitude is to be thankful and appreciative for everything good that one has. Like patience, gratitude and thankfulness provide immense spiritual benefits for individual and collective wellbeing of human beings. Ghazali's masterful treatment of these immense human qualities from the second book in the fourth volume or quarter of his *magnum opus* "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God" is presented here in condensed form as follows [18]:

Faith (*Iman*) has two parts - half patience and half gratefulness (gratitude). These are the two qualities from the Divine qualities and are two names from Divine names - *Saboor* (One with consummate patience) and *Shakoor* (One with consummate gratitude). Being unfamiliar with the reality of patience and gratitude is to be unfamiliar with both parts of faith and to be ignorant with two qualities [or Divine attributes] of God. Without faith, Divine proximity is not attained, and the path of faith is not traversed without knowing the Being on which one needs to have faith. It is known from this that it

is imperative to shed light on both parts of faith – patience and gratitude. Since both of these parts [of faith] are integrated together, both of them will be explained in the same book in seven chapters.

Explanation of Patience

Excellence of Patience: God has explained innumerable qualities of patient people. Qur'an has mentioned patience at more than seventy places. In these verses, many higher [spiritual] degrees and goodness have been attributed to patience. For instance, God says:

وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا لَمَّا صَبَرُوا۟

"And We made many leaders (exemplars to follow) from among them, when they exercised patience, who guided people [to the right path] by Our command." (Qur'an, Chapter 32, Verse 24)

وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ ٱلْحُسْنَىٰ عَلَىٰ بَنِىٓ إِسْرَٰٓءِيلَ بِمَا صَبَرُوا۟

"And your Lord's beautiful word (promise) [O Muhammad!] in favor of the Children of Israel was fulfilled because of their patience." (Qur'an, Chapter 7, Verse 137)

وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ صَبَرُوٓا۟ أَجْرَهُم بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا۟ يَعْمَلُونَ

"And those who patiently persevere, We will surely grant them recompense of their good deeds." (Qur'an, Chapter 16, Verse 96)

أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ يُؤْتَوْنَ أَجْرَهُم مَّرَّتَيْنِ بِمَا صَبَرُوا۟

"Those people will get double recompense because of their patience." (Qur'an, Chapter 28, Verse 54)

إِنَّمَا يُوَفَّى ٱلصَّٰبِرُونَ أَجْرَهُم بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

"For the people of patience, there will be boundless [Divine] recompense." (Qur'an, Chapter 39, Verse 10)

In this verse, God has promised to grant boundless Divine recompense for patience. From among all righteous deeds, this (patience) is the only one for which Divine recompense will be unlimited. God has promised to the people exercising patience that He is with them [in a state of spiritual proximity along with other meanings of with-ness]:

وَٱصْبِرُوٓا۟ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ مَعَ ٱلصَّٰبِرِينَ

"And be patient. Verily, God is with those who exercise patience [in the face of all hardships, calamities and adversities and persevere in that state until God opens up the doors of ease and a way out for them]." (Qur'an, Chapter 8, Verse 46)

At one place, the qualities of mercy, blessings and guidance have been combined for the people of patience. These three qualities combined together, have not been attributed to any other worshippers:

أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَٰتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ ۖ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ ٱلْمُهْتَدُونَ

"Upon them (people of patience) are the salutations (blessings) from their Lord and mercy and they are the ones who are [Divinely] guided [unto their Lord]." (Qur'an, Chapter 2, Verse 157)

There are a large number of prophetic traditions on [virtues and excellences of] patience. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

اَلصَّبْرُ نِصْفُ الْإِيْمَان

"Patience is half of faith". (Narrated by *Hadith* collections *Abu Na'eem* and *Khateeb* on the authority of Abdullah ibn Mas'ud [May God be pleased with him])

In one tradition, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said, "Things that have been given less [in amount] to you include certitude (*Yaqeen*) and patience (*Sabr*). One who received a greater share from both, even without a big share in night (*Tahajjud*) prayers and supererogatory (optional) fasting, there is no cause of concern [as certitude and patience weigh heavily in one's favor]. In the current state [of poverty and neediness] you are in today, if you exercise patience in it, it is more preferable to me than you bringing in so much good deeds as are done by all of you together. But I am afraid that after I am gone, the world will be opened up for you [in terms of power, wealth, and worldly opulence] and you will [start to] consider each other as bad. At that time, the denizens of heavens (celestial beings) will consider you bad. One who exercises patience in this state [of poverty, neediness, hardships and adversities] and takes oneself to account [in a state of self-examination and self-accountability for all wrongs], will get complete reward [from God]". After that, he recited the following verse:

مَا عِندَكُمْ يَنفَدُ ۖ وَمَا عِندَ ٱللَّهِ بَاقٍ ۗ وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ صَبَرُوٓا۟ أَجْرَهُم

"All that you have is bound to perish, whereas all that is with God is everlasting and eternal. And verily, We will grant those who are patient, a mighty recompense in accordance with the best they ever did." (Qur'an, Chapter 16, Verse 96)

God sent a revelation to his prophet David (Peace and blessing of God be upon him), "Adopt My character and one of my character traits is that I am extremely patient". Abdullah bin Abbas (May God be pleased with him) narrates that when Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) paid a visit to *Ansar* (the natives of Medina who hosted Muslims fleeing Mecca to avoid persecution), he asked them, "Are you believers?" Everyone stayed quiet. Umar (May God be pleased with him) replied, "Yes we are believers". Prophet asked, "What is the sign (indication) of your faith (*Iman*)?" Ansar replied, "We have gratitude [to God] when we have prosperity, we have patience when we are facing adversities, and we are accepting of [God's]

decisions (Divine decree)". He said, "By the Lord of the *Ka'ba*! You are believers [as these are the characteristics of true believers]". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Tabarani*) Jesus (Peace and blessing of God be upon him) said, "You will achieve the thing you like when you exercise patience on disliked things". Umar bin al-Khattab (May God be pleased with him) wrote a detailed letter to Abu Musa al-Ash'ari (May be God be pleased with him) and wrote in it among other things, "Adopt patience and remember that patience is of two types, one is superior to the other, exercising patience on calamities is superior and even more superior to it is to exercise patience on things (refraining from doing things) that God has forbidden [out of Divine wisdom for the betterment of humanity, although they may seem desirous and pleasurable]. Know that patience is the crux of faith and it is so because *Taqwa* (pious awe, reverence and fear of God) is the most superior of all righteous deeds and it is from patience (*Taqwa* originates from patience)". Ali (May God be pleased with him) said, "Foundations of faith is on four pillars: Certitude, patience, struggle [in the path of God especially in terms of inner spiritual struggle] and justice (fairness with everyone and in everything)". Intellectually, patience is still a good quality, however, this cannot be fully understood until we explain the reality of patience and its meaning.

Reality and Meaning of Patience

Patience - A Station of the Path to God (*Deen*), a Destination of the Spiritual Struggle (*Suluk*): It should be known that patience is a station from among the stations of the path to God and is a destination from among the destinations of the spiritual travelers. All stations of the path to God are found in three matters: Firstly, understanding or Gnosis (*Ma'arif*); secondly, [inner spiritual] states; thirdly, deeds or [outer bodily] actions. Among them, understanding is the foundational matter that engenders [spiritual] states that in turn engenders [noble] actions. Among all three, understanding resembles the tree, states resemble the branches, and actions resemble the fruits. All the destinations of the spiritual travelers are like this. Patience is the name of the combination of understanding and [inner spiritual] state. Deed is the fruit that comes into being as a result of the existence of both of these (understanding and inner spiritual state). Now we will shed light on all three matters.

Gnosis or Understanding: Without the understanding of the sequence (ordering) that exists between angels, human beings and animals, the understanding of patience cannot be attained. Patience is a peculiar human characteristic [that is not shared by any other creations in the overall scheme of things]. Patience cannot even be imagined in animals and angels - in animals due to their inherent fault and in angels due to their inherent perfection. The detail of this is that lust has been imposed upon the animals and they have been subjugated by it to such an extent that the cause of their movement or stillness is just lust. They do not have any inner power that would restrain this lust in them and prevent them from this purpose of theirs. In combating the lust, the retention of the force of restraint and opposition is the patience. Angels have only been created to long for the Majestic Lord (God) and be pleased with their degrees of proximity and

closeness to Him. Lust has not been placed in them that would move them away from the longing of degrees of Divine proximity and the Being of the Magnificent Lord. Nor are they in need of an army that would make them overpower and subjugate the forces that deter them from the Divine Presence. It is because the forces that deter one from Divine Presence are the lusts and lusts have not even been created in them. On the other hand, human being has been endowed with the lust and also with the power through which human being can overpower the lust. In the beginning of one's creation, human being has been created with faults (shortcomings, deficiencies, and weaknesses) like animals, such that one did not have any other lust besides the lust for food that one was in need of. After some time [as one progressed in life], the lust for play (sport), embellishment and beautification was born in one. After that [as one further progressed in life and reached puberty], the lust for marriage was born. These lusts appear in specific order. At first, one does not have the power of patience within oneself. That's why, patience is the name of one army standing firm and persevering against another army when there is a war going on among them due to the conflict between their respective objectives and purposes. The only army that exists in a child, is desires that also exist in animals. However, God has made the rank of human being superior [to all other creations] out of Divine largesse and benevolence and has kept the rank higher than that of animals. That's why, when one's existence becomes completed (human being reaches the age of maturity and physical development at puberty, although full scale of mental, psychological, emotional, and intellectual development happens around the age of forty), God appoints two angels to every individual - one of them teaches one the correct path [of guidance] and second one helps one with treading the right path. It is because of these two angels [and the work they do with the person they have been assigned to], human being has distinction over animals. Other than that, human being has other peculiar characteristics - first is the characteristic of having God's Gnosis and understanding His Prophet [Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) and the Divine message he brought which is the culmination of the same message that was brought by all other Divinely-ordained prophets throughout the human history on earth), and second is the characteristic of understanding the [Divine] wisdom and reasons related to the unfolding of all matters and their final endings. These two qualities or characteristics are also attained from the angel who is responsible for guidance and leading [to the right path]. Animals neither have the Gnosis of God and His Prophet nor do they know their final end. Instead, they only see the path that they desire at a certain time and just wait for things they find delicious. This is their state to such an extent that even if they are sick and a beneficial medicine is given to them, they will neither accept it nor will they accept its benefits.

Human being knows from the [inner Divine] light of guidance that the following of lusts is harmful for one in terms of its final conclusion (end) [in terms of the undesirable situation it lands one in]. However, it is not enough to just know this [that the following of the lust is harmful for human being], but one should have the strength to abandon everything that is harmful. Human being is familiar with things that harm one but does not have the power to abandon or prevent them such as illnesses [and pleasurable food, drinks and substances that are injurious to one's health]. In that case, one needs the capability and power by means of which one can remove the lust and along with

that, one can do so much spiritual struggle so that one's friction, argumentation and hostility with the lower self (*Nafs*) comes to an end [and consequently, the lower self becomes subservient to all that is good]. For this purpose, God has appointed an angel that keeps one in the path of guidance and helps and supports one with the armies [of Divine forces] that one does not see. It is the duty of these armies to engage in combat with the armies of lusts and repel them. Sometimes these [angelic] armies become weak and sometimes they rise up strong. Their weakness or strength is dependent on how much help one has received from God. It is like the strength or weakness of the light of guidance for creations [of God].

Force of the Divine Path and the Force of Lust: For the sake of ease of understanding, we will call the quality that gives superiority to human being over animals for subjugating lust as the "force of the path to God" and the lust seeking its implications as the "force of lust". Now we need to understand that there is a war going on between the force of the Divine path and the force of lust. Sometimes first [force] overcomes the second and sometimes second defeats the first. The battlefield of this war is the heart [of the human being]. The force of the path to God gets help from angels who are the helpers of the party of God, and the force of lust gets help from Satan [and his party] who are the helpers of the opposers of God. Patience is that the force of the path to God, remains firm and persistent against the force of the lust. If the servant [of God, i.e., human being] perseveres and defeats the opponent (force of lust) and always remains bent on opposing it, then it is tantamount to helping the party of God and gets included among the groups of patient ones. But if one gets weakened and defeated until the force of lust subjugates one to the point when one is unable to be patient [against the force of lust and gives in to it], one gets included among the party of Satan.

Spiritual State and its Fruits: The conclusion of this explanation is that the abandoning of lust is an act that comes into being in the state of patience. In other words, the fruit of the state of patience is the abandonment of lust. Furthermore, patience is the force of the Divine path staying firm against the force of lust. The continuation and perpetuity of the force of the path to God, is a state that is attained by means of understanding lusts and reasons for opposing them. When one has this certitude that lust is an enemy of God and a bandit in the path of [Divine] guidance, the force of the Divine path gets strengthened. This certitude is that understanding that is construed as "faith" (*Iman*). When the force of the Divine path is strong, one does not swerve (weaken) in one's perseverance and those actions are automatically performed that oppose the ramifications of lust. It is proven from this that the stage of abandonment of lust cannot be completed without understanding the force of the Divine path that is the opposite of the force of lust.

Return to Our Objective: [In summary,] Patience is the perseverance of the force of the Divine path in its combat against the force of lust from the lower self. This combat [tussle and constant struggle] is the peculiar characteristic of the human being. That's why, '*Kiraman Katibeen*' (the two angels on two shoulders of every human being recording all the deeds of that individual, whether good or bad, in a register of lifelong

human deeds that is presented before God on the Day of Judgment for Divine judgment on that individual to be either an attainer of eternal felicity or an attainer of eternal damnation) are appointed on every person except on those who are deranged (those who have lost their mental faculties and have no sense of anything left in them in the medical sense of the word) and children (those who have not attained puberty as that is the point when one attains discernment and becomes Divinely accountable for one's actions) and do not record their actions. We have written this before that if attention is paid to the angels for benefiting from them [in terms of making conscientious decisions to do good in all matters and acting upon the ramifications of those decisions], they record it as a good deed and if they (angels) are avoided [in terms of making conscientious decisions to do evil in any matter and acting upon the ramifications of that decision], they write it as evil [in their register of lifelong deeds]. Deranged and children do not have the capability to benefit from them (the angelic forces or the force of the path to God) [as they do not have the discernment about right or wrong in all matters], that's why, paying attention or avoidance [of the angelic forces or force of Divine path] cannot be imagined from them. They only record the deeds of people who are capable of paying attention to or avoiding them.

However, sometimes the dawn of the light of guidance starts at an early age [when child starts to know the things of shame] and this light becomes completed and perfected by the time of the age of discernment (puberty), just like the early morning light is dim but when the sun rises, it becomes completed. But this guidance is not perfected and if one does not act on its implications, there will be no harm to one's Hereafter, however, one will not be able to avoid the worldly harm. One who is a guardian or responsible for a child (like a parent), and is also kind and affectionate [to that child], and is [inherently] good natured like '*Kiraman Katibeen*', should imprint on the book of the heart of the child, all the imaginations (criteria or considerations) of good and evil. Afterwards, the spreading open of this book happens, if the child does good, one praises the child and if the child does something bad, the child is admonished and reprimanded against it. The guardian or responsible individual who has this type of dealing with child under one's care and training, is an inheritor of angelic habits and is a trustworthy carrier of their [noble] character traits. By employing angelic character traits, qualities and habits for the [benefit of the] child, such an individual will attain the nearness of God like angels and will be included among the groups of prophets and intimates of God (*Siddiqeen* or saints and Gnostics).

Three Degrees of People of Patience: When lust comes to an end and the force of the path to God becomes dominant, and after unceasing spiritual struggle and extended perseverance [in that path], patience becomes easy for one, the servant [of God] attains the [spiritual] station [at that point] that is called "*Rida*" or acceptance of the Divine will. This will be explained in detail in the Book of "Acceptance of the Divine Will" (Chapter 16). Some Gnostics have said that there are three degrees of people of patience. One degree is the abandonment of lust or the degree of the people of repentance. Another (second) degree is acceptance of the Divine will [like a calamity befalling one] and that is the degree of people of abstinence [from desires of the lower self also known as *Zahideen*]. The third degree [which is also the highest degree] is to love the treatment

that God metes out to one [whether it is good or bad, desirable, or undesirable, ease or hardship, prosperity or adversity]. This is the degree of the friends and intimates of God (*Siddiqeen*). We will explain in the Book of [Divine] Love (Chapter 16) that the [spiritual] station of love [of God] is superior to the [spiritual] station of acceptance of Divine will, which in turn is superior to the [spiritual] station of patience.

It should be known that patience can be categorized into different types in terms of the injunctions of the Divine law such as obligatory (*Fard*), supererogatory (optional or *Naffil/Nafila*), undesirable (*Makruh*) and forbidden (*Haram*). Therefore, it is obligatory to exercise patience over things that are forbidden [in the Divine law], supererogatory or optional over things that are undesirable [*Makruh* but not forbidden]. It is forbidden to have patience on [things like] inflicting of pain that is forbidden in the Divine law. For instance, if someone wants to kill someone then one [knowing that] should not be patient with that [and should do what is necessary to prevent that from happening]. Having patience on that will be illegal [as it will be a contravention of the Divine law]. Similarly, if someone harasses or molests one's wife that incites his anger and sense of honor but he does not express it because of patience and becomes a silent spectator to what's happening to his wife, then this patience is forbidden [in the Divine law and one is obligated to prevent that from happening by all means].

The purpose of this categorization is that we should understand the criterion of the Divine law regarding patience. In prophetic traditions [of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)], patience has been termed as half of the faith. It does not mean that all types of patience are praiseworthy, instead, only that patience is good that is good in the eyes of the Divine law, otherwise there is no Divine reward or recompense for inflicting hardship on the body for no reason.

A Servant is in Need of Patience in all States

It should be known that the situations one encounters in life are of two types - either they are in accordance with one's desires or they are undesirable, and one dislikes them. A servant is in need of patience in both of these states. Desirable states include health, wealth, fame, abundance of relatives, friends, helpers and followers, excessiveness of wealth and possessions, all the pleasures and blessings of the world. In these situations, a servant is in dire need of patience because if one does not restrain the lower self (*Nafs*) and leaves it liberated in all the worldly pleasures and delights, even though these pleasures are permissible, then there is the apprehension that it (lower self) will become rebellious and boastful. According to Qur'an, this is the peculiar characteristic of the human temperament that one gets bent on rebellion when one is in prosperity:

كَلَّآ إِنَّ ٱلْإِنسَٰنَ لَيَطْغَىٰٓ ٦ أَن رَّءَاهُ ٱسْتَغْنَىٰٓ ٧

"Verily, the human being resorts to rebelliousness [by transgressing the bounds of decency and moral rectitude] when one sees oneself as prosperous, self-sufficient and self-reliant." (Qur'an, Chapter 96, Verses 6-7)

That's why, some Gnostics say that a believer exercises patience in hardships but an intimate of God (Siddiq) exercises patience in the state of wellbeing (peace and prosperity). Sahl bin Abdullah al-Tustari (May God have mercy upon him) said, "Being patient on the state of wellbeing (peace and prosperity) is harder than being patient on hardship". When the doors of worldly wealth and possessions opened up for prophetic companions [of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)], they said, "When we were tested with paucity and poverty, we bore it with patience and came out successful in that trial and tribulation. Now we are being [Divinely] tested with wealth and prosperity. We may not be able to have patience with that and [if that happens] we will fail [that test]". [Prophetic companions expressed this apprehension of failure to restrain themselves from indulging in prosperity out of God-fear, after the demise of the Prophet. They came out victorious in that as well, because they recognized that patience is needed in both adversity and prosperity to keep themselves on the path of God].

Second type includes those circumstances that are not in accordance with one's desires. These circumstances can be of three types - those that are in one's control such as good and bad deeds [that one is capable of doing], secondly those that are not in one's control such as hardships and accidents (calamities), and thirdly those are not in one's control initially but later on, one is able to do something about them.

Hiding One's Struggles and Hardships is the Perfection of Patience: Perfection of patience is to hide one's illness, poverty, and all other adversities [from all people]. From these categorizations of [different types of] patience, one gets to know that patience is obligatory in all states and actions. A person who adopts solitude to protect oneself from lust, cannot be oblivious to patience, irrespective of the extent to which one stays alone. It is because the Satanic insinuations (*Waswaas*) affect the heart, and the perturbation and distress caused by these insinuations, does not allow one to have [inner] peace [or peace of mind] even in solitude. Two types of thoughts occur in the heart - either about things that one has lost and there is no way of recovering them or making amends, or about things that are possible to obtain in future. Thoughts, whether they are about things lost [in the past] or things one expects to get in future, in both cases one wastes time. Heart is an instrument of human being [that happens to be the essence of human existence] and one's lifetime is its asset. If one's heart remains negligent of Divine remembrance (*Dhikr*) and contemplation (*Fikr*) even for a moment, that would be a great loss. Remembrance refers to that action of the heart that nurtures the longing for God [Who is the final destination for every human being] and intimacy with Him. Contemplation refers to the action [of the heart] through which one attains God's Gnosis and makes that Gnosis a means (*Waseela*) for attaining the Divine love. That is possible when the thoughts of the heart are in permissible matters [that are needed for one's worldly life, like means of livelihood and everything that helps with attaining that]. However, that is not the case most of the time as frequently, the

thoughts of the heart encompass lusts and strategies for attaining them [are the focal point of those thoughts]. This person is always in a state of dispute with those people who have acted against one's wishes even for once, or one has this superstition (suspicion) that they can go against one. Instead, the people who are extremely sincere, devoted and altruistic towards one and busy themselves all their lives to earn one's goodwill, this person even considers them as one's adversary and thinks about strategies to subjugate them and to erase all thoughts of opposition to one from their hearts. In short, this is their perpetual indulgence [as they are continually inundated with these negative thoughts] and their days and nights are spent in these [negative and hostile] contemplations [that are detrimental to their spiritual path and wellbeing].

Two Armies of Satan: All these are the machinations of Satan. In reality, Satan has two armies - one army that flies and second army that walks. The army that flies, refers to insinuations and the army that walks, refers to lusts. The reason is that Satan has been created from fire and human being from soil (dust). This soil also has fire in it. It has tranquility in its temperament and the temperament of fire is movement. Therefore, it cannot be imagined about a raging fire that it will not move. Instead, it is on constant move in line with its inherent nature. Satan, the accursed, who was created with fire was commanded to get tranquility [in a state of stillness and peace] and to prostrate before the creation [of God] that has been created from dust (i.e., the human being, represented by the father of humanity, Adam [Peace and blessings of God be upon him]). However, Satan refused to accept that Divine command, exercised arrogance and disobedience, and expressed this reason for refusal to obey the Divine command that, "I have been created with fire, while Adam [the father of humanity,] has been created with dust [hence, I am superior to him and it does not behoove a superior to show humility to an inferior]". So, when this evil one (accursed Satan) did not prostrate to our father, Adam (Peace and blessings of God be upon him), then how will he prostrate to his descendants (the human race)? The purpose of prostrating before the descendants, is to refrain from the insinuations (*Waswaas*) that he engenders in their hearts. If Satan desists from his actions, then it would be tantamount to becoming subservient to human being, by leaving his wrong actions, out of the fear of the human being. The soul (essence) of prostration is obedience and submission. Putting the forehead on the ground [in prostration] is its body (outer semblance). The act of putting forehead on the ground is termed prostration. If this act had been used for humility and lowliness, then only that had been imagined by this act.

[Crux of the Matter:] Nevertheless, you should not become negligent of the pearl due to the shell, of soul due to the body, and of pith (core or essence) due to the rind (outer shell). It is important to be mindful of that. Let it not be the case that you become entrapped in the outer realm (outer appearances of things and matters) and become negligent of the unseen [spiritual] realm [to know the core or essence of everything and every matter]. Let it not be the case that you become entrapped in only the outer (visible) realm and become negligent of the unseen realm. You know that Satan is your eternal enemy who has been granted the respite to misguide you. It cannot be imagined now that he will accept your obedience or refrain from instilling insinuations in your heart, except for when all of your thoughts and contemplations have a single focus

and [it is that] you are fully absorbed in God's contemplation. In that case, Satan the accursed, will certainly not find any way towards reaching you and you will get included among those slaves of God who are sincere and are outside the dominion of this accursed. It is not possible that there is no Divine contemplation in your heart and also there are no Satanic insinuations in your heart. This Satan is a fluid element that circulates in human veins like blood circulation. It is like a cup replete with a liquid substance. If someone now wants the cup to retain the liquid substance and also air in it then that is not possible, or not have any air and also no liquid substance in the cup. That is also not ostensibly possible, rather, to the extent the liquid substance is absent from the cup, to that extent air will fill up the cup. That is also the state of the heart. If it (heart) is filled with good contemplation, it will remain protected from Satan's interference, otherwise, to the extent it will remain negligent [of Divine contemplation], to that extent Satan will interfere in it. This happens to the extent that if one is negligent even for a moment, in that moment of negligence, one will have no companion other than Satan. That's why, God has said:

وَمَن يَعْشُ عَن ذِكْرِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ نُقَيِّضْ لَهُۥ شَيْطَٰنًا فَهُوَ لَهُۥ قَرِينٌ

"And one who becomes blind from the remembrance of the Most Compassionate (God), We impose a Satan (devil) on such a one so that he lives with one at all times [who becomes one's insinuating companion to dissuade one from all forms of goodness and to take one to all forms of negativities]." (Qur'an, Chapter 43, Verse 36)

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ تَعَالٰى يُبْغِضُ الشَّابَّ الْفَارِغَ

"Verily, God dislikes an idle youth (a young man or woman spending time doing nothing or wasting their time) [since their time and youthful energies are being utilized in wrong, negative, unproductive, idle, and time-wasting endeavors]".

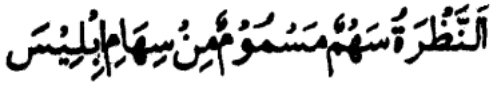
The reason for disliking idle youth is that when one does not do something that will busy one's heart in a permissible matter [like studies and earning a livelihood] or is indulged in a contemplation related to the Divine path (*Deen*), then ostensibly one will seem idle but in reality, Satan would have made his abode in one's heart and would be pursuing [the goal or agenda of] increasing his offspring [in the breeding ground of the heart of the idle youth]. Compared to all animals, Satan breeds the most, because his inherent nature has fire in it and if a dry thing comes in the way of fire [raging or not], it continues to expand fast. The existence of lust in the heart of a young person is just like dry grass coming in front of a fire. Then just like the non-existence of food (fuel) for fire (dry wood) causes it to become quiet, similarly if lust ceases to exist, Satan will not be able to do anything and will be forced to burn down his own abode [in the human heart] by his own hands. If you deliberate on this, it will become abundantly clear that your worst enemy is that quality of your heart that you call lust.

Medicine of Patience and the Way of Getting Help with it

Let it be known that One who has given this illness has also informed [us] of its medicine and has also promised recovery [from it]. Although patience is an extremely difficult act, but it is possible to attain it by means of the magmas (combination) of knowledge and action. Knowledge and action [in accordance with the knowledge,] are the two medicines that are used to prepare medicines for all the diseases of the heart. Depending on the type of illness, the right knowledge and action will be needed in accordance with that.

There are different types of reasons that are impediments to patience. Every reason is cured by its opposite. An effort is made to eradicate the reason that has caused the disease. We can provide some examples of determining the method of cure. For example, an individual is desirous of patience from the lust of committing adultery. However, one has no control over the privates, or one has control over the privates but has no control over the eyes [from looking everywhere that instigates the urge], or has control over the eyes but has no control over the heart, that remains a center of lusts at all the times and dissuades one from Divine remembrance, contemplation and persistence in good deeds. This is an illness and the details of its cure is as we have explained before, that patience is the name of the battle between the force of Divine path and the force of lust. If we want to see either one of them to succeed, then we will need to strengthen that force so that it becomes predominant and we need to weaken the other force so that it becomes subjugated. In this matter (example), we would want that the force of the Divine path becomes dominant and the force of lust becomes weak.

How Does the Force of Lust Becomes Weak? There are three ways of weakening the force of lust. One is to examine its real power and see where it is getting its strength from. If we deliberate on this, we will see that it derives its strength from sumptuous food. Its cure is to fast continuously and at the time of breaking the fast, one should eat [simple] food in such small quantities that would not instigate lust. For example, one should avoid meat. Second method is to abandon all the causes that immediately instigate lust. Lust is instigated by the eyes [by looking at, usually forbidden things that invigorate passions], eyes cause movement in the heart, and heart incentivizes and stimulates lust. That's why, the first thing to do is to limit the views of the eyes and the way to accomplish it is to adopt solitude [not just in person but also in terms of avoiding the usage of anything that causes looking at wrong things possible], and staying away from occasions where there is an opportunity to see beautiful faces. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessing of God be upon him) said:



"The [wrong and forbidden] look is from among the arrows of Satan dipped in poison".

Satan shoots this arrow in such a way that it never misses its target. There is no shield either that can stop this barrage of arrows, except by closing the eyes or standing away from the target. Satan fires these arrows by means of beautiful faces (physical appearances, graphic images and displays). If one can get out of the influence of such

looks, one can then protect oneself from these poisonous arrows. Third method is to adopt permissible means to satisfy lusts. The easy way to protect oneself from adultery is to get married [and those who are already married to stay focused on and loyal to their marriages]. This way, lower self (*Nafs*) will get satisfied [and will not look to satisfy itself through wrong means], because what the lower self is desiring, is already present in the permissible thing (i.e., marriage in this example) then what would be the need to adopt forbidden means? For majority of people, this is the most beneficial method of cure because to end the intake of good food and reducing other essential food items can impact the health and one will become lazy in doing other things. So these are three causes of cure: first cure, which is to cut down the food, is like ending the food of a rebellious animal so that it becomes weakened and its strength diminishes and dissipates; second cure's example, is like removing meat from the front of a dog and fodder from the front of a [farm] animal so that when dog sees the meat and when animal sees the fodder, there is no instigation in their inner beings; third method of cure, is like giving dog something that it is inclined to and that will satisfy it, so that it has enough strength remaining that will allow it to be patient with its disciplining and training.

Strengthening the Force of the Path to God: Preceding discussion was about weakening the force of lust. We will now discuss the strengthening of the force of the Divine path. The force of the Divine path can be strengthened by two means: one is to incentivize the lower self about the benefits of the spiritual struggle and its fruits (positive implications) for one's faith and worldly matters. The way to incentivize it is through the traditions that are listed in the excellence of patience and to deliberate more on what we have written about the excellence of the final conclusion of worldly matters, as well as matters related to the path to God. According to a [prophetic] tradition, the Divine recompense and reward for an adversity [provided one bears it with patience without whining and complaining], is greater than the thing lost [as a result of that adversity]. Hence, people of insight and inner eye (or wisdom) are desirous of adversities like that because what the suffering person has lost, was bound to go away tomorrow (in future) if not today as it was not meant to stay, however, one attained such a thing in place of the thing lost, that will stay with one forever. The example of this is like someone selling away a faulty product and getting something good in return. Obviously, one need not regret the demise of the bad product. This [kind of outlook on reality of matters, that otherwise cause regret and remorse,] is related to Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*) that is from the faith (*Iman*). Sometimes this Gnosis is weak, sometimes strong. If strong, the force of the path to God is also strong and gets greatly energized. If weak, the force of the path to God is also weak. This Gnosis or the power of faith [in God] is also called certitude. This certitude is the motivator of unwavering patience. However, there are very few among the people [of the world] who have been granted the tenacity and resoluteness of certitude and patience.

The second method is to gradually bring about the domination of the force of the Divine path, over the force of lust and over the desires from the lower self, and gradually get it accustomed to this combat to the extent that when it gets a taste of victory, it immediately becomes audacious and attains domination over it. It is not difficult to achieve this domination [over the force of lust and the lower self]. Getting accustomed

to strenuous work and continuous practice, strengthens the organs that do the work. That's why, lifters of heavy weights, farmers and soldiers have more strength than tailors, perfume sellers, scholastic theologians (*Fuqaha*) and spiritual travelers (*Sufis*), as their limbs remain weak due to lack of continuous [physical] hard work and not being accustomed to doing that.

In summary, a person who has no strength for patience and does not do the slightest amount of spiritual struggle, the force of Divine path becomes weak to such an extent that one is too weak to dominate the lust. While one who makes the lower self, accustomed to opposing the lust, dominates it whenever one wants.

The Dominion of the World and the Hereafter: Torah, Gospel, Psalms, Qur'an and scrolls of Moses and Abraham (Peace and blessings of God be upon them both) and all heavenly books, were [Divinely] revealed [in their original forms,] to invite the creations [of God] (humanity) towards the everlasting dominion and to admonish them to live as kings in the world and also be kings in the Hereafter. The kingship of the world is to adopt abstinence (*Zuhd*) [from worldliness and detachment from everything it has,] and being contented with less material possessions. Kingship of the Hereafter is to achieve that subsistence (*Baqa*) after attaining God's nearness, that has no extinction (*Fana*), achieve that honor that is not impacted by humiliation, and achieve that coolness of eyes that has been concealed in this realm (world) and no self is aware of it. Satan invites creations (humanity) to the dominion of this world because he knows that those people who are running after the dominion of this world, do not get the dominion of the Hereafter. It is because, the world and the Hereafter are like two co-wives - one cannot live in the presence of the other. Furthermore, Satan knows that if someone gets the world (worldly wealth, possessions, glamor and power), it is not going to stay, hence, he incentivizes world [to human beings] then not only that, if someone gets the world, he does not let one live in peace. Instead, he is jealous of one, makes one worried in variegated ways, and raises new disputes. Such is the state of all worldly wealth and possessions - firstly, they are hard to obtain and if obtained, one needs to come up with a lot of strategies to retain them, endure extreme hardships and if they are retained then for how long? It will come to an extinction (end) as there is no escaping from death for anyone whether one is a ruler or ruled.

Why Abstinence is Dominion? The meaning of abstinence is that one gets control over one's lust and anger, and both of them become subservient to the force of the Divine path and to the gesture (beck and call) of the faith (*Iman*). This is the real dominion. The meaning of real dominion is complete freedom. Human being is deserving of being called "free" when one is able to safeguard against anger and lust, otherwise, if one becomes a prisoner of lust then sometimes one is being a slave of one's private parts, and sometimes a slave of someone else's objectives. Rather one will become a type of animal that has no power over its own being, instead, it gets subjugated at the hands of others (human beings) who put the collar in its neck and take it away however they want and wherever they want. How great of a deception one is in that one, after becoming a slave [of one's base desires from the lower self that are animalistic and bestial in nature], thinks that one is an owner [and master of one's

destiny and being,] and after becoming a slave of one's desires, thinks that the qualities of lordship have been born in one? Such a person is humiliated in the world and also humiliated in the Hereafter. Reality is that the abstinence is the real dominion and by means of this dominion, one attains the [everlasting success and eternal] dominion of the Hereafter. Those people who have been deceived by Satan, remained in loss in both places - in the world and in the Hereafter, and those who were granted the Divinely bestowed ability (*Tawfeeq*) for perseverance, remained successful both in this world and in the next.

Explanation of Gratitude

This chapter [on gratitude] has three elements: first is excellence of gratitude, explanation of its reality, types and injunctions; second is the reality of blessings and their types, in terms of special or common; third is the explanation of what is superior from patience or gratitude.

First Element - Gratitude and its Excellence: On one hand, Qur'an praised Divine remembrance as:

وَلَذِكْرُ ٱللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ

"And remembrance of God is a tremendous matter." (Qur'an, Chapter 29, Verse 45)

On the other hand, [Divine] gratitude was granted this [great] honor that it was mentioned alongside of [Divine] remembrance. Hence, it was said:

فَٱذْكُرُونِىٓ أَذْكُرْكُمْ وَٱشْكُرُوا۟ لِى وَلَا تَكْفُرُونِ

"Remember Me, I will remember you [in all of your struggles and travails and will be your succor] and have gratitude towards Me [for My uncountable blessings that I granted you even without you asking for them,] and do not be ungrateful [to the point of rejecting or disregarding Me]." (Qur'an, Chapter 2, Verse 152)

Mentioning of gratitude alongside of Divine remembrance, argues for the perfection of its excellence. Qur'an says:

مَّا يَفْعَلُ ٱللَّهُ بِعَذَابِكُمْ إِن شَكَرْتُمْ وَءَامَنتُمْ

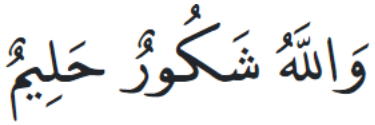
"What will God do by punishing you if you are grateful [to Him] and have faith [in Him]?" (Qur'an, Chapter 4, Verse 147)

وَسَنَجْزِى ٱلشَّٰكِرِينَ

"And God rewards swiftly the people of gratitude." (Qur'an, Chapter 3, Verse 145)

At one place, God categorically stated that gratitude on Divine blessings, leads to [retention and] increase in blessings. There are no exceptions to it while other

blessings have exceptions like granting prosperity, accepting prayers, providing sustenance, imparting forgiveness, and accepting repentance all come with the mentioning of exceptions. All of these are concomitant on His will. It is known from these verses that gratitude is an excellent thing, that's why, God did not make it concomitant to His will but categorically promised to increase His blessings [upon sincere gratitude]. How can there be any doubt about gratitude being a good [inner] trait as this is a quality from among the Divine qualities [of God]. Henceforth, God has mentioned this quality for Himself:



"And God is extremely grateful (appreciative of even paltry things, even though they may be replete with shortcomings, that we manage to do in the path of goodness and righteousness) and possessor of forbearance." (Qur'an, Chapter 64, Verse 17)

Atta (May God have mercy upon him) narrates that he visited Aisha (May God be pleased with her) [the wife of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) after his demise, in search of prophetic knowledge] and asked her, "Please tell me about the strangest thing you saw in the state of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)". She wept upon hearing this and said, "What state of his was not strange? One night he came to me and lied down with me in my bed under my blanket until his body touched mine. After that he said, 'O daughter of Abu Bakr! Please leave me so I can worship my Lord'. I said, 'O Messenger of God! I desire your closeness, but it is your wish'. Then I gave him permission. He went to the water container, performed ablution without using lot of water. After that he stood up in prayers [to God]. During prayers, he started to weep until his tears started to flow on his chest. He then bowed [in prayers] and also wept in bowing. He then prostrated and also wept therein. He raised his head from prostration and wept again. He kept weeping until it was dawn and Bilal (May God be pleased with him) came to inform him about the early morning (*Fajr*) prayers. I asked him, 'O Messenger of God! Why do you weep so much when God has forgiven all of your past and future sins?' He replied, 'Should I not be a grateful servant [of God as I am doing this out of profuse gratitude to God in the state of utter slave hood to Him]? And how should I not cry when God revealed the below verse in Qur'an:

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ وَٱخْتِلَٰفِ ٱلَّيْلِ وَٱلنَّهَارِ
وَٱلْفُلْكِ ٱلَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي ٱلْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنفَعُ ٱلنَّاسَ وَمَآ أَنزَلَ ٱللَّهُ
مِنَ ٱلسَّمَآءِ مِن مَّآءٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ ٱلْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا
مِن كُلِّ دَآبَّةٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ ٱلرِّيَٰحِ وَٱلسَّحَابِ ٱلْمُسَخَّرِ
بَيْنَ ٱلسَّمَآءِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ لَءَايَٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ١٦٤

'Verily, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the alternation of the night and the day, in the sailing of ships through the oceans for the benefit of humanity, in the water (rain) that God sends down from the sky, and the life that He brings about with it to the earth that is dead, in the animals of all kinds that He has scattered through the earth, and in the change of winds and the clouds that roam freely between the sky and the earth, are indeed signs for people of intellect, reason and understanding.'" (Qur'an, Chapter 2, Verse 164) (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Aisha [May God be pleased with her])

It is learned from this [prophetic] tradition that one should not stop weeping [before God] in any situation. A servant's (human being's) heart is as hard as a rock, rather it is harder in its hardness [as it commands excesses and oppressions]. This hardness is only removed by weeping, whether one weeps out of fear [of God] or gratitude [to God].

Reality of Gratitude: Gratitude is a [spiritual] station from among the stations of the spiritual travelers (*Salikeen*). This station is made up of [three principles of] knowledge, action, and [inner spiritual] state. Among all three, knowledge is the origin of this station. Knowledge begets [inner spiritual] state and state begets [noble] actions. Meaning of knowledge is to recognize the blessings from their Giver, state is the happiness that one attains after attaining that blessing, and action is to act according to the approval (Divine injunctions) of the Giver of blessing. This action is related to the heart, [bodily limbs and] organs and tongue - all three of them.

First Principle - Knowledge: In this respect, one should have knowledge of three matters: one is of the blessing; second is of the realization that this blessing is a blessing in one's favor; third is of the Being of the Giver and of the [Divine] qualities that grant the reward and complete it [with finesse and perfection]. With respect to God, one should have the knowledge that all blessings are only from God, He is the real giver, all middle means [between the Giver and recipient] are in His control and subjugation. This is the highest Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*) that comes after Divine glorification (*Taqdees*) and Divine Oneness (*Tawheed*) but it is highest in rank. Among the Gnosis of faith, the first one is Divine glorification which is to know that God is above all imperfections [limitations, weaknesses, flaws, shortcomings and blemishes of any sort,] and after that

it is Divine Oneness which is to know that the Being who is understood to be free of all imperfections, is One, has no partners and co-sharers, after that, it is to know that everything that exists in the realm of existence, are all the creations of this very Being who is One, and what has been granted to one [among the creations] is imparted to one as a reward from Him. It is obvious that this Gnosis comes after the previous two Gnosis [of Divine glorification and Divine Oneness], that's why, its rank is higher than the previous two because it has, besides the confession [and inner acceptance] of Divine glorification and Oneness, the confession of the [Divine] perfection of power and perfection of invention and creative finesse.

The Middle Means are Compelled to do the Divine Bidding: Nevertheless, if one receives God's blessings through other means, one should understand that this other person was compelled to deliver this blessing to one because God imposed His intention on this other person, and created all the factors that compelled such person to give [to one], and He put this in his or her heart that, "All the goodness and wellbeing of the world and the Hereafter for me is dependent on giving to one". When this thought is born in the heart from God, there is no choice left but to act upon the implications of this thought. Therefore, it should be understood that if the other person is giving you something, it is being given to you [with the intention] for his/her own benefit and not for your benefit. If other person did not have any benefit in giving to you, he or she would not have given to you. If other person had not known that his/her benefit is embedded in your benefit, such a one would never have benefited you. Now by benefiting you, the other person is being desirous of his or her own benefit and he or she is not your [real] benefactor or giver, instead he or she has made you a conduit (means) for an expected blessing for oneself. The Real Giver is someone else Who subjugated the apparent giver for you and instilled in his or her heart such beliefs and intentions that compelled him or her to convey that blessing to you.

If you understood these matters in this way then you will attain the Gnosis of God's Being and actions and you will become a monotheist, you will have power over [Divine] gratitude, rather, just because of this, you will be called "a profusely grateful servant [of God] par excellence". It is necessary for gratitude to have the Gnosis that all blessings are from God, if there is a slightest bit of doubt in it, one will neither be able to fulfil the rights of that [Divine] blessing nor of the Giver of that. Human being should neither be relying on the apparent giver nor be boastful or proud of it (the blessing), otherwise, it will be a deficiency in one's knowledge and deficiency in knowledge can lead to loss of right actions.

Second Principle - State: This [inner spiritual] state is attained by the Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*) of the origin of the blessing. It means to be pleased with the Giver [of blessings] with humility, lowliness, and with a trepid heart. This state is also gratitude just like Gnosis has been termed as [the state of] gratitude, but state will be termed as gratitude when it will encompass all its conditions. Included among them, the most important condition is that the happiness [for blessings one has] is only with the Giver, not with the blessings or with the reward. Perhaps you will have difficulty understanding this. Hence, we explain it to you by means of an example. There is a king who embarks upon a journey.

He granted someone a horse as a reward. This person can be happy for three reasons after getting the horse. One reason is that one is happy just with the reward which is the horse because it is a precious (expensive) reward and one can get a good ride out of it which is in accordance with one's wishes. Obviously, this [type of] happiness is experienced only by someone who does not care about the king, instead one's sole objective is only the horse. Suppose if one had found this horse in a forest, one would have been equally happy. Second reason can be that one is not just happy on getting the horse, instead, one is [also] happy because this horse is a proof of king's benevolence and kindness towards one. It shows that the king has a place in his heart for one. If one had found this horse in a forest or someone else had given it to one besides the king, one would not have the slightest bit of happiness because one is not in need of a horse or what one desires, such as getting a place in king's heart, is much greater than a horse. Third reason could be that one is happy on getting the horse because one wants to ride on it to serve the king or one wants to ride the horse to endure the hardships of travel, to earn the proximity of the king. It is possible that one would make progress after incessant hard work to become a minister [in king's court]. This person is not contended with making room in the heart of the king as one does not consider it much, instead, one is a seeker of so much closeness that whatever king bestows upon the people, does so by making one an intermediary [and bestows upon people by means of this intermediary]. Obviously, such a rank is granted to only those who are extremely close and trustworthy, on top of that, one is not seeking the ministry but rather desiring only the proximity of the king, the confidence of the king, and the honor of king's continuous vision. If [such a] one is given a choice between ministry and proximity [with the king] one would choose proximity.

These are the three degrees [of gratitude]. In that, the first degree is not of any use as the focus of all of one's attention in that is the horse. One is happy with getting the horse and is oblivious to the giver, whether it is a king or a lower ranking person. Similarly, one who gets lost in the blessing after getting it and after finding it suitable to one's objective, is far removed from gratitude. Second degree is included in the meaning of gratitude in terms of the receiver of blessing being pleased with its giver but this happiness is not with the being of the giver, instead it is due to the giver thinking of one as worthy of the blessing who can be expected to bestow more blessings on one in the future. This is the state of those pious servants [of God] who do good deeds out of fear of [Divine] punishment and hope for [Divine] reward and express gratitude [to God]. Complete gratitude is in the third degree. In other words, the receiver of blessing is happy with the thought that one will make the blessing, a means of attaining God's proximity. Its sign is that one is not happy with the world, instead, one is only contented with so much world that can help one with the worldly life, be remorseful for those worldly blessings that make one neglectful of the worship and dissuade one from the path of truth. It is because the blessing is not the objective due to the [inherent] pleasure in it, just like the receiver of the horse was not pleased because it was sturdy and fast running, instead, one considered it as a means of reaching in the presence of the king so that one continuously attains the honor of king's vision and proximity. That's why, Shibli (May God have mercy upon him) said, "Gratitude is the vision of the Giver of blessing, it is not the vision of the blessing". This high [spiritual] rank cannot be attained

by one whom all the pleasures of the world have been restricted to stomach and private parts, the circle of perception has been limited to color and sound, [instead,] the heart should be devoid of all [material] pleasures and is unfamiliar with all [carnal] perceptions. If the heart is sound, it finds pleasure only in God's remembrance, Gnosis, and [Divine] Presence. That heart does not find pleasure from these things (Divine remembrance, Gnosis and Presence) that has been [adversely] impacted by bad habits.

One should be thankful to God as mentioned above. If one cannot have gratitude at that [highest] degree, one should be contended with the second degree. There is no importance of the first degree. There is also a great difference between second and third degree. The objective of the person in second degree is the king so that the king can give one the horse and in the third degree, the objective is the horse so that one can make it a means of attaining the nearness of the king. How great of a difference is there between the two in which one is a seeker of God so that He would bestow blessings upon one and second is the seeker of blessings so that one can reach God by their means.

Third Principle – Deed According to One's Happiness: Third principle is to act upon the implications of happiness one received from Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*) of the Giver. This act is related to the heart, tongue, and bodily organs, all three. The meaning of the action of the heart is that a servant [of God] intends good and has concealed (embedded) good [in one's heart] for all creations. The meaning of action through tongue is by means of Divine praises that represent gratitude. The meaning of actions through [bodily] organs is to use God's blessings in His obedience and seek help from them in abandoning sins. Therefore, gratitude through eyes is to hide every fault of a believer that one glances at; gratitude through ears is to cover all the faults of believers that one comes to know by ears; gratitude through tongue is to utter such words that please God. If organs are used like that then it becomes gratitude of these [Divine] blessings [of having these organs] that has been [Divinely] ordained.

Ideology of Divine Oneness (*Tawheed*) or Annihilation (*Fana*) of the Self: There are two beliefs on this. One is called the ideology of Divine Oneness [or Unity]. Those who are perfected in this, are of the view that the grateful and appreciative lover and beloved are two names for the same Being. In their view, nothing exists except God:

كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ

"Everything is perishing except His Being [as He is the only Being that is everlasting, eternal, and self-subsisting with no beginning and end, One who exists without any other being and all other beings exist through Him]." (Qur'an, Chapter 28, Verse 88)

This proclamation is the voice of their hearts. This ideology is based on reality and it has both the truths in it regarding beginning-less eternal "beginning" and endless eternal "ending". It is because there is no being except God that exists on its own, rather it is impossible for anyone or anything [except God] to have an existence like that. Real existence is what's existing through its own being. Something that could not exist by its own being, its existence will not be through its own being, instead it would be

associated with other [existence(s)]. It is to the extent that if its own existence is viewed without its dependency on any other [for its existence], then its own existence would be uncertain. Present is the one who exists on its own and the existence that exists on its own being is such that if all others cease to exist, its own being is not impacted. If there is an existence that exists by its own being and all others also exist by its own being then it is called "*Qayyum*" (Self Existing) and "*Qayyum*" cannot be anything other than this One Being [whom we refer to as God] because that One would be "*Hayyul Qayyum*" (The Living and Self Existing). This quality belongs only to that One Being. If you look at it from this point of view, it will be clear that everything's source and dependency is Him alone, the One being. That's why, only He is the grateful, only He is the One who is the recipient of gratitude, only He is the Lover, and only He is the Beloved. Therefore, when Habeeb ibn Habeeb (May God have mercy upon him) recited this verse:

إِنَّا وَجَدْنَٰهُ صَابِرًا ۚ نِّعْمَ ٱلْعَبْدُ ۖ إِنَّهُۥٓ أَوَّابٌ

"Verily, We found him (Prophet Ayyub or Job [Peace and blessings of God be upon him]) [when he was afflicted with a Divinely ordained calamity that he remained] patient, he was a very good servant [of God], he frequently turned to God [for each and every thing]." (Qur'an, Chapter 38, Verse 44)

He said, "Glory be to God! How wonderous this thing is [that has been conveyed in this verse]! He is the One who granted the strength for patience [to Prophet Job] and He is the One who praises him so as He has praised Himself, He is the One who is praising". He is the Love and He is the Beloved. This is a lofty rank. You could understand it by means of an example that is close to the limit of your intellect. That example is when a writer likes one's [own] writing, it is said that one has liked one's own self. Similarly, when a creator likes one's one creation, it is as if one likes one's own self. Or a father likes his child in the sense that such a one is his child, it is as if he likes his own being. All the things that are in the world except God, they are all the writing and creation of His. If He loves His own writing or creations, it is as if He loves His own Being. This is the ideology of Divine Oneness. *Sufis* (spiritual travelers or seekers of truth) construe it as the "annihilation (*Fana*) of the self". Its meaning is that the servant has become extinct from one's own being and from everything other than God and one only sees the One True Being everywhere [as He is the only One that exists]. A person who does not understand these [spiritual] realities, repudiates them and says, "How can a human being become extinct when one has a four yards long shadow and eats one or two kilograms of flour in a day?" Ignorant due to their ignorance, laugh at the claim of annihilation (*Fana*) of the self. It's a pity that the Gnostics have this destiny that ignoramus do not understand their talk, laugh at them, and injure their hearts with arrows of ridicule.

Return to the Objective: The purpose of the coming of [true] prophets [of God] is their invitation to people to come to perfection of Divine Oneness. However, the path that leads one to the perfection of Divine Oneness has innumerable obstacles and is marked with a long and arduous journey. Divine law shows the method of treading this difficult path and completing this demanding journey. As far as the question is concerned as to

what the benefit to God is of one's gratitude, its answer is that God gets no benefit out of it, it is purely for the benefit of the servants [of God]. We will explain this point by means of an example. Suppose a king sends a ride, clothes, and reliance for travelling to a servant of his who lives in a far-off place so that one comes close to the king after traveling. There can be two cases for king wanting to bring the servant closer. First [case] is that the purpose of king wanting to bring the servant closer is to have the servant serve the king and by participating in a campaign, one would become a source of strength for the kingdom. Second case is that the king may not have any personal benefit in this, and the servant is also not capable of doing that service that would free the king from all worries. In short, the servant is such an existence that would make no difference to the king's dominion, whether paucity or increase, in that case, if king provides the servant with ride, clothes and provision for travelling then it is king's royal endowment (largesse and generosity). The only purpose that can be there is for the servant to use these resources to get closer to the king and to have the honor of being in royal presence. King's own benefit is not the objective. The state of the servants [of God, i.e., human beings] is the same. Whatever they receive from God is for [the attainment of] their own higher ranks and not for God's benefit.

In the first case in this example, the servant coming close to the king [after travelling] cannot make one grateful until the servant provides the service [to the king] that is due from the servant. In the second case, a servant can either be grateful or a rejector. The way of gratitude in this case would be to use the favors that king has granted, in endeavors that the king likes and not to spend them as one likes. The way of rejection would be to spend these blessings on things that the king dislikes or to spend on a journey that would make the servant more distant from the king. Therefore, if the servant wore the clothes, rode the horse, and spent the provision [for the journey] sent by the king on the journey [to him], it will be said that the servant expressed gratitude to the king because the servant spent all these things [that were all bestowed by the king anyway,] on king's favorite endeavors. But if the servant wore the royal clothes, rode the horse but chose the path that went in the opposite direction of the king, that instead of bringing one closer to the king, made one more distant, then it will be said that the servant rejected the blessings and used them against the king. Similarly, that person (servant) is also involved in rejection of blessings who does not take advantage of royal endowments, let them sit idle by not wearing the clothes [sent by the king], not riding the ride, and not taking the provision of the traveler in that journey. This person's rejection is lesser than the first.

Such is the state of the creations! God created the human being. Initially they are in need of using lusts so that their bodies get completely developed. Usage of lusts make them distant from the Divine proximity, while their felicity (supreme achievement) of eternal happiness and everlasting success (*Sa'adah*) is only in Divine proximity. That's why, God created such blessings that draw them (humans) closer to God and also gave them the capability to use them. Qur'an explained the human closeness and remoteness to God in these words:

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا ٱلْإِنسَٰنَ فِىٓ أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ

"We have created human being in the best of molds." (Qur'an, Chapter 95, Verse 4)

ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَٰهُ أَسْفَلَ سَٰفِلِينَ ﴿٥﴾

إِلَّا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ وَعَمِلُوا۟ ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتِ فَلَهُمْ أَجْرٌ غَيْرُ مَمْنُونٍ ﴿٦﴾

"After that we descend one to the lowest of the low except for those who had faith [in God and eternal verities that are part of belief in God] and performed good, pious and righteous deeds, for them there is a mighty Divine recompense that will never cease." (Qur'an, Chapter 95, Verses 5-6)

It is known from this that God's blessings are such instruments that by their means, a servant [of God] progresses from the lowest of the low towards the rank of the felicity of eternal happiness and everlasting success (*Sa'adah*). God has created these instruments for the servants and does not care if one draws close to Him [or not]. However, the servant has the prerogative to use these instruments for help with either [Divine] obedience or sin (disobedience). If one obeys, one will be termed grateful because one has desired the approval of one's Lord. If one disobeys, one will be termed as a rejector or ungrateful because one has committed things that are disliked by one's Lord. If the servant kept God's bounties (blessings) as suspended by not using them either in [Divine] obedience or disobedience, it is also a rejection of God's blessings [for not using them to dispel tendencies for disobedience]. All things created in the world are essentially instruments for the servants (human beings) and by their means, a servant can attain felicity of eternal happiness and everlasting success (*Sa'adah*) of the Hereafter and nearness of God. Every obedient servant is grateful to God's blessings commensurate with one's obedience and every person who did not use these blessings or every sinner who used them in the way of distancing oneself from God, is an ungrateful rejector and exceeder of bounds in the love of other than God.

Blessings Worthy of Gratitude

The second component of gratitude are the blessings that are worthy of gratitude. Here the reality of blessings, their types, and ranks (grades) will be explained. Furthermore, things that constitute as special blessings and things that constitute as common blessings will be explained. God has bestowed so many blessings on His servants that they cannot even be counted, as God said:

وَإِن تَعُدُّوا۟ نِعْمَتَ ٱللَّهِ لَا تُحْصُوهَآ

"And if you start counting God's blessings [that are boundless and innumerable], you will not be able to encompass them in any count." (Qur'an, Chapter 14, Verse 34)

Reality of Blessing and its Types: Let it be known that every good, every pleasure, every felicity, everything that is sought after, and everything that is effective and helpful,

is a blessing but the real blessing is the eternal happiness and everlasting success (*Sa'adah*) in the Hereafter. Other than the eternal happiness and everlasting success in the Hereafter, anything that is called a blessing, either it is incorrect to say so or it is an allegorical usage [of the term "blessing"]. For example, a worldly blessing that does not help with the Hereafter, is incorrect to be termed as a blessing. It is correct to apply this term on anything that is a source of reaching the eternal happiness and everlasting success in the Hereafter by one or more means, because that thing is a cause of attaining the real blessing. Blessings and pleasures that are the means of attaining eternal happiness and everlasting success of the Hereafter or help with it, we will divide them up into several types in order to explain them:

First Division of Blessings: If we ascribe all matters to ourselves, there will be four types of matters [that pertain to us]: First, those matters that are beneficial for both the world and the Hereafter such as knowledge and beautiful morals, manners, character and inner disposition (*Husn ul-Khulq*); second, matters that are non-beneficial in both the world and the Hereafter such as ignorance and bad morals, manners, character and inner disposition; third, matters that are beneficial for the world but non-beneficial for the Hereafter such as finding pleasure in lusts; fourth, matters that are harmful for the world but beneficial for the Hereafter such as controlling the lusts and opposing the lower self. The first type that is beneficial for both the world and the Hereafter is the real blessing, such as knowledge and beautiful morals, manners, character, and inner disposition. The [second] type that is non-beneficial in both is the real hardship which is the opposite of knowledge that is ignorance, and opposite of beautiful character traits that is bad character traits. The [third] type that is beneficial for the world but non-beneficial for the Hereafter, the people of insight and wisdom term it as pure hardship and ignoramus consider it a blessing. Its parable is like someone finding poison laden honey. If one is familiar with the poison, one will consider the honey as a calamity, but if one is unfamiliar with it, will consider it a blessing. The [fourth] type that is harmful for the world but beneficial for the Hereafter, the people of intellect [and wisdom] consider it as a blessing and ignoramus as a hardship. Its parable is like a bitter medicine that has a bad taste that is temporary, but the health attained through it is welcoming and long lasting. If a child is given a bitter medicine to drink, one will consider it a hardship and will not agree on taking it except when the child is forced to take it, whereas a well-aware and civilized human being happily drinks the bitter medicine. Not only that, one appreciates the person who provides the medicine or its ingredients or helps with its preparation and is grateful to such a person and feeling indebted with the favor, wants to draw close to such a person and showers with gifts. Reality is that the ignorant friend is more harmful than an intelligent enemy. Every human being is a friend of one's lower self but that is an ignorant friend, that's why, it treats one the way that even the enemy does not treat one.

Second Division of Blessings: Worldly means have both good and bad admixed in them. Very few means are such that there is only good in them without [the presence of any] evil. Wealth, fame, children, relatives and all other [worldly] means are such that they have both good and evil in them. Such means are further subdivided into three types: First type [of means] are those causes whose benefit is more than the harm such

as wealth and fame according to one's needs, etc. Second type are those causes whose harm is more than the benefit for majority of people such as having a lot of wealth, widespread fame, etc. Third type are those causes whose benefit and harm are equal. Those are the matters that are different for different individuals, for example, a pious person is benefited from good wealth, even if it is a lot as one spends it in the path of God by charity and giving. If someone has this Divinely bestowed ability, abundance of wealth will be a blessing for one. Some ill-fated people are harmed by a small amount of wealth. In other words, they think of it as insignificant, complain to their Lord all the time, and have greed for more. For such a person, certainly this wealth is a cause of humiliation and hardship.

Third Division of Blessings: All matters related to good [righteous deeds and actions] are of three types, in one aspect: First, those that are sought after in themselves; second, those that are sought for other things [and not in themselves]; and third, those that are sought after both in themselves and for other things. First type that are sought after and beloved in themselves includes the pleasure of Divine vision and the meeting with Him. This is the felicity of eternal happiness and everlasting success (*Sa'adah*) of the Hereafter and it is for forever. This felicity of eternal happiness and everlasting success is not sought to achieve something else by its means, instead, it is sought after for itself and it itself is the objective. Second type or example of matters that are sought for other things include *Dirham* and *Dinar* (gold and silver coins that were old currencies, in other words, money and wealth). If something else had been appointed to fulfil the worldly needs then there would not have been any difference between gold, silver and stones [as they would all have been equal in value and importance], but since they (money and wealth) are the means of attaining [worldly] pleasures and by their means, worldly comforts are obtained with ease and expediency, that's why, they became beloved in themselves to the ignorant. They have become beloved to ignorant to the extent that they accumulate them, bury them in the ground (hoard them secretly and safely at multitude of places out of the reach and knowledge of others), spend them ostentatiously, and think that money and wealth are the objective in themselves. The parable of such people is of a person who fell in love with another and because of that also starts to love the messenger who relays each other's messages and becomes a means of their meeting. Afterwards, the love of the messenger increases to such an extent that one forgets about the real beloved and not even take the name of the beloved for the rest of one's life and instead, gets oneself busy in the love of the messenger and serving him or her. This is extreme ignorance and open misguidance. Third type includes those matters that are sought after in themselves and for other things as well, such as health and safety. They are also sought after because after finding health, a human being attains the ability to do Divine remembrance and contemplation that in turn lead one to God. Furthermore, by their means, human being attains worldly pleasures as well. Health is sought after in itself too because sometimes one does not want to walk on foot [as one is accustomed to using a ride or conveyance], despite that, one wants the two feet to be fine, although the safety of the two feet should be sought because they are the means of walking, but since safety is beloved in itself, that's why it is sought.

In these three types, the real blessing is the first type, in other words, the felicity of the eternal happiness and everlasting success of the Hereafter that is sought in itself. The thing that is sought after in itself and also for other things is also a blessing but compared to the first blessing, it is lower in rank. Thing that is not sought after in itself but for other things such as money and wealth, will not be called blessings because they are blessings in themselves, instead they will be called blessings because they are the means. Hence, they are blessings only for the one who cannot fulfil one's needs without them. If an individual's objective is knowledge and worship and has wealth (financial resources) according to one's need then for such a one, both gold and stone are equal, as one will neither be interested in their existence nor in their non-existence. If they prevent one from contemplation and worship [of God] then they will be [the harbinger of] hardships and will not be blessings for one.

Fourth Division of Blessings: All matters related to good [that are blessings worthy of gratitude,] can be classified into another type. There are three types of good: beneficial, pleasurable, and beautiful. Pleasurable is the thing whose benefit is known right away. Beneficial is that which is beneficial in terms of its final ending. Beautiful is that which is good in all circumstances. Evil also has three types: loss causing, ugly, and harmful. In good, the thing that has all three types of good accumulated in one, is knowledge and wisdom - it is beneficial in the sight of people of knowledge and wisdom and also pleasurable and beautiful. In evil, its example would be ignorance - it is loss causing, ugly and harmful. An ignorant person feels the pain upon realizing that, "I am ignorant, but this other person is knowledgeable", and perceives one's faults at that time and is pained by it. At this point, the desire for pleasure of knowledge raises its head, but jealousy, arrogance and bodily lusts become impediments in one's path. As a result, two opposing forces pull one in two opposite directions and one's soul becomes constricted as one is in pain in both situations - in case of acquiring knowledge, one has to leave arrogance and endure the humiliation of education [as it strikes at one's ignorance every step of the way] and above all, one need to abandon lust for that. In case of not acquiring knowledge, one [who has realized one's ignorance] continues to have the realization of one's deficiency. Such an individual is constantly enduring [a type of] punishment.

Fifth Division of Blessings: This blessing applies to every pleasure. Pleasures are of three types: Intellectual, bodily that are common with some animals, and bodily that are common with all animals. Example of intellectual pleasures include knowledge and wisdom because this pleasure is not perceived by eyes, ears, nose, taste, stomach or private parts, instead, its pleasure is perceived only by the heart because it is specific to the [human] quality (peculiarity) that is called intellect. Of all the pleasures, this is found the least even though this is the most superior of all pleasures. The reason for its paucity is that the pleasure of knowledge can only be perceived by a scholar (possessor of knowledge) and the pleasure of wisdom can only be perceived by the wise (possessor of inner illumination or Gnosis). How many people of knowledge and wisdom exist? Everyone knows [that there aren't many]. Most people [who claim to be or are reputed to be knowledgeable and wise] are scholars and wise in name and appearance [only but in reality, are devoid of true knowledge and inner illumination].

The reason for excellence and distinction of knowledge is that its pleasure always stays with one and never declines either in this world or in the Hereafter. It is a companion that accompanies one all the time and people of knowledge do not get bored with it. All other pleasures make one tired. For example, eating to one's fill causes laziness in the body, after getting done with copulation there is a feeling of tiredness and heaviness, but no matter how much one swims and dives [into the depths] in the ocean of knowledge [in particular the Divine knowledge] and wisdom, there is no feeling of weightiness on one's temperament and the body does not fell prey to tiredness. The person who, despite being capable of achieving such a distinctive and superior thing, settles on something inferior and wanders helplessly behind a few days' worth of pleasures, who can doubt the madness and misfortune of such a person? As far as the question is concerned as to why the laymen cannot perceive the pleasure of knowledge, its reason is that they do not even have the fondness (*Dhawq*) for it and one who does not have fondness, does not have any understanding and any intense desire (*Shawq*). Intense desire is subservient to fondness. If there is no fondness, there will not even be the desire, or following of lusts has caused an upheaval in their temperaments and a disease in their hearts [to even appreciate knowledge and inner illumination].

Second type of pleasure that is bodily and is shared with some animals such as domination, superiority, the pleasure of being foremost. In this type of pleasure, some animals also share them with human beings like lions, cheetahs, and other powerful animals. Third type of pleasure that is bodily and is shared with all animals, includes the pleasure of stomach (food and eating) and private parts. These pleasures are the most widespread and common, even though they are the lowest and cheapest of all pleasures. Hence, all living creatures on the face of the earth share them with human beings to the extent that even tiny insects find pleasure in them. A person who rises above this [lowest form of] pleasure, fells prey to the pleasure of domination and power (governance or authority over others). One who rises [even] above this pleasure, gets indulged in the third (first in this explanation) pleasure until the pleasure of knowledge and wisdom dominates in one, especially the Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*) of God's Being (*Dhaat*) and qualities (*Sifaat*) gives one such a pleasure, that one does not find it in any other thing. This is the rank of those who have been brought near to God (*Siddiqeen* or Gnostics).

Four Types of Heart: In light of this explanation, there are four types of heart. One type of heart exclusively loves God and does not find tranquility until increase in God's Gnosis continues [unabated]. Second [type of] heart does not even know the types of pleasures existing in God's Gnosis. It only finds pleasure in fame, control (authority and power), wealth, and all bodily pleasures and delights. Third heart finds intimacy with God by means of Divine remembrance (*Dhikr*), contemplation (*Fikr*) and Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*) in most situations, but sometimes human traits have their impact on it. Fourth heart often has human traits dominating it but sometimes it benefits from the fountains of knowledge and Gnosis. Among them, first type of heart is not possible. If we suppose that it's possible then they are so few in numbers that are close to non-existing. World is replete with second type of heart. Third and fourth type of hearts exist but in

small number, instead it will be more appropriate to call them rare. At the time that was close to the time of prophets, there was an abundance of such hearts. As the prophetic era gradually became distant, the number of these type of hearts also dwindled and this process [of dwindling but not complete extinction] will continue until the Day of Judgment.

Sixth Division of Blessings: This division is dominant over all [types and divisions of] blessings. The summary of this division is that the blessings are of two types - one is the blessing that is the apex of one's objective in itself and that is the eternal happiness and everlasting success (*Sa'adah*) of the Hereafter and has four matters included in it: that existence and subsistence that never faces extinction (*Fana*), that happiness that does not have any sorrow admixed with it, that knowledge that is not accompanied with any ignorance, and that wealth and opulence that does not have any poverty in it. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

لَا عَيْشَ الْأَعَيْشَ الْآخِرَة

"There is no life and comfort except for the life and comfort of the Hereafter [in the Divine Presence in a state of eternal bliss and everlasting triumph]". (Narrated by *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Anas [May God be pleased with him])

He mentioned this at an occasion of happiness so that the lower self (*Nafs*) does not become contented with worldly happiness and should consider (realize) that there is also a life after this life that has no end in that, there will only be happiness that will never transform into sorrow.

Stages of Guidance: Guidance [towards truth and eternal verities] is such a reality without which no person can seek eternal happiness and everlasting success (*Sa'adah*). [Guidance is one of the greatest blessings that is worthy of gratitude.] One human being can be desirous of something that has one's felicity of the Hereafter embedded in it, but if one does not even know in which matter one's salvation is embedded in, and thinks of [matters that cause] turmoil [in both one's inner being and in the outer world] as one's [act of] reformation, then one will not be benefited with mere intention [to do good]. If guidance is absent, the intention, capability, and means [to do good things that are possessed by one] are of no benefit [hence, guidance is imperative for propelling and leading one in the right direction towards the path of felicity, salvation, and eternal happiness and endless success]. There are three stages of guidance. First stage is the understanding of good and evil. God has bestowed all His servants with this blessing - to some by granting them intellect [which is the means of discerning good and evil, and this faculty has been granted to human beings all over the world] and to some by sending them the [Divine] message by means of His prophets. Heavenly books [in their original unadulterated forms], the noble prophets [of God and their teachings], and inner insights and wisdom [that has been Divinely bestowed on human beings all around], are the means of guidance. No one can be stopped from these means. Only those people whose hearts are devoid of arrogance, jealousy, and love of the world, act on the attainment of these means. Those who hearts are replete with arrogance, jealousy, and

love of the world, or are entrapped in means that cast a veil on the intellect, even though the eyes are bright (able to see), for them Qur'an has said:

فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَعْمَى ٱلْأَبْصَٰرُ وَلَٰكِن تَعْمَى ٱلْقُلُوبُ ٱلَّتِى فِى ٱلصُّدُورِ

"Reality of the matter is that the eyes do not become blind [to see the truth], instead, the hearts that are in their chests become blind [and lose their faculty of reason and perception]." (Qur'an, Chapter 22, Verse 46)

Things that cast a veil over intellect and perception include habits, attachment to one's traditions [and upbringing], desire to safekeep [or holding onto] the [intellectual and ideological] inheritance of their ancestors. Qur'an has explained it in these words:

إِنَّا وَجَدْنَآ ءَابَآءَنَا عَلَىٰٓ أُمَّةٍ وَإِنَّا عَلَىٰٓ ءَاثَٰرِهِم مُّقْتَدُونَ

"[Some people say that] We have found our ancestors on this method (way of life or thought process) and are also [just] following them along [without necessarily having any rationale behind it]." (Qur'an, Chapter 43, Verse 23)

Arrogance, jealousy, superiority complex are such matters that blind the hearts and prevent them from treading the path of guidance. The second stage of guidance comes after the first stage and is achieved as a result of spiritual struggle (*Mujahada*). God grants (rewards) that with guidance under all circumstances. God says [by way of promise to the entire humanity without any exception]:

وَٱلَّذِينَ جَٰهَدُوا۟ فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا

"Those who strive [with vigorous striving] in Our paths, We will surely guide them to our paths (ways of guidance)." (Qur'an, Chapter 29, Verse 69)

The third stage of guidance is after the second stage. This guidance is such a [spiritual and inner] light (illumination) that shines, after perfection of spiritual striving, in the realm of prophethood and in the realm of [Divine] guidance. Due to this light (inner illumination), one gets to know those things that cannot be known by means of intellect which is what the Divine law, injunctions, and prohibitions are dependent on, and through which the acquisition of knowledge is possible. This guidance is called absolute guidance. Other than it, all other guidance are its prefaces (initial steps) and veils [from the real guidance]. This guidance is such that God specifically ascribed it to Himself, as the source of all guidance is the Being of God. God says:

قُلْ إِنَّ هُدَى ٱللَّهِ هُوَ ٱلْهُدَىٰ ۗ

"Say (O Muhammad!) 'No doubt, the path of guidance is the one that is from God'." (Qur'an, Chapter 2, Verse 120)

This [guidance from God] is called "life":

أَوَمَن كَانَ مَيْتًا فَأَحْيَيْنَٰهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُۥ نُورًا يَمْشِى بِهِۦ فِى ٱلنَّاسِ

"A person who was dead before [due to the death of the heart and the soul], then We brought one back to life, then We bestowed upon one such a light (inner spiritual illumination) that one walks around among people with that light." (Qur'an, Chapter 6, Verse 122)

Following verse refers to the same thing:

أَفَمَن شَرَحَ ٱللَّهُ صَدۡرَهُۥ لِلۡإِسۡلَٰمِ فَهُوَ عَلَىٰ نُورٖ مِّن رَّبِّهِۦۚ

"The person whose heart God has opened up for the path of submission to His will, is on a light (inner illumination) from one's Lord." (Qur'an, Chapter 39, Verse 22)

Soul - A Greater Blessing: Consider how the benefit of bodily organs and limbs, perception and strength are dependent on a subtle vapor whose center (residence) is the heart, therefrom it circulates in the entire body through extended veins. As soon as it reaches an organ in the body, it creates in it sense, perception, movement and strength, just like a [light-giving] lamp that is moved around in a [dark] house and wherever this lamp reaches, this light will reach there. Hence, any corner of the home where this lamp reaches, will be a cause of light reaching there. Although this light is a creation and invention of God, but He has made the lamp a cause of it, out of His wisdom. This subtle vapor is termed as the "soul" in the terminology of physicians. Its abode is the heart. Its parable with the heart is such that the soul has been resembled with the flame of the lamp, heart is like the vessel, the black blood in the heart is like the wick, provision (food) for it is like oil for the lamp, and the life that is in the entire body due to it, is like the light inside the house due to the lamp. If the oil in the lamp is consumed, the lamp extinguishes, similarly, the lamp of the soul extinguishes when the intake of provision discontinues. Furthermore, when sometimes the wick burns down to ashes and no longer retains the ability to absorb oil even though the lamp is replete with oil, similarly, the blood that is in the heart could burn due to the heat of the heart and despite provision, lamp of the soul extinguishes because the capability to accept provision is no longer there that ensures the continual existence of the soul. Furthermore, just like the lamp extinguishes at times due to internal reasons like the oil becoming consumed or wick getting burned down, similarly, it also extinguishes due to an external reason like the wind. Similarly, soul would sometimes become extinct due to some internal reason and sometimes external such as killing that puts an end to it. Whether the lamp extinguishes due to consumption of oil in it, or due to burning of the wick, or due to a someone blowing on it, or due to it coming in the path of wind, no matter how it extinguishes, all these matters come into existence by the Divine decree ordained by God. Same is the case of the human soul. No matter how it comes to an extinction, or how it extinguishes, it is in God's knowledge and in accordance with His eternal decree. The Preserved Tablet (God's Book of Records that contains the knowledge of the past, present and future) has a final appointed time for every soul. When this time is up, the relationship of soul with the body will terminate and this termination will only happen as the Writer of destiny (God) has written (ordained).

Just as the extinguishing of lamp causes the house to become dark, similarly, the exiting of soul [from the body] causes the darkness to spread in the entire body and the

process of illuminations discontinues that was [previously] attained from the soul, in other words, sense, perception, intentions, and illuminations of all matters that are encompassed by the term "life". Soul is also a secret and is a distinct allusion to Divine blessings and is a [Divine] proclamation of the veracity of this subject matter:

قُل لَّوۡ كَانَ ٱلۡبَحۡرُ مِدَادٗا لِّكَلِمَٰتِ رَبِّي لَنَفِدَ ٱلۡبَحۡرُ قَبۡلَ أَن تَنفَدَ كَلِمَٰتُ رَبِّي وَلَوۡ جِئۡنَا بِمِثۡلِهِۦ مَدَدٗا

"Say (O Muhammad!), 'If the ocean were to become ink for [writing] the words of my Lord, the ocean would be exhausted before the words of my Lord are exhausted, even if We brought the like of it as a supplement.'" (Qur'an, Chapter 18, Verse 109)

A person despite knowing all these matters, still refusing to acknowledge the Divine blessings and not having gratitude for them, is very unfortunate, distant from Divine mercy and close to Divine punishment.

Why People do not have Gratitude

When the glance of an intelligent human being falls on anything or the thought of anything occurs to the heart, one searches for God's blessings in that. It should be known that people do not have gratitude to God due to ignorance and negligence (heedlessness), because those people whose hearts and eyes are covered with thick veils of negligence and ignorance, do not consider any blessing of God as a blessing. When they do not even know a blessing then how can they have gratitude for it? If they have understanding of a blessing, then the way of gratitude they know of, is just to say *Al-Hamdulillah* (All praises be to God) or *Al-Shukrallah* (All thanks be to God) with tongue and consider it sufficient. They do not know that the meaning of gratitude is to use the blessing in the completion of the wisdom (purpose and intent) related to that blessing and that wisdom is God's obedience. If people have these two understandings and still not have gratitude to God, then its reason is no other than the domination of Satan and lusts.

Causes of Negligence with Blessings: There are many causes of negligence with blessings. One cause among them is that the people due to their ignorance, do not consider blessings, that people commonly have, as blessings, that's why, they do not have gratitude for them [as they are taken for granted as everyone's inalienable birth right as they are generally perceived as nothing special]. For them, blessings should be special [or specially given to someone and should not be common to all or vast majority of people], in other words, if there is something that someone specially has [only] then it can be termed as a blessing [in people's mistaken perceptions]. As far as food and drink or the excellences of bodily system (capabilities and utilities of various bodily organs and how they help every individual without which life can be extremely difficult) are concerned, every big, small, rich, poor, prominent, lowly (socially insignificant) [individuals] have them in common. That's why, how can these be blessings [in their mistaken viewpoint]? This is the reason why they do not even consider fresh air as a blessing, even though, it is a tremendous blessing. If someone's throat is squeezed for a moment causing the passage of fresh air [in the body] to stop, then not getting fresh

air can cause one to embrace death. Similarly, if someone is imprisoned in a public bath (*Hammam*) or in a place where only hot air passes or one fells into a deep well where air is heavy due to humidity, then one can die due to suffocation. Suppose if someone is able to get out of the entrapment of the hot public bath or deep well and you ask such a one about the value and preciousness of fresh air, one would consider it a [great] blessing and will express gratitude for it. It is extreme ignorance that people consider a blessing as a blessing only when it is taken away from them. Sometimes that blessing is returned to one again and sometimes it is not, one should have gratitude under all circumstances [whether paucity or plenitude, having or not having because what we have today in terms of things taken for granted, can be gone tomorrow].

You must not have seen a seeing person who expresses gratitude to God for one's eyes, even though this is a great blessing. But when the light of eyes is gone, and one becomes blind then one values this blessing. If one fortunately gains the eyesight back, one expresses gratitude for it but until one has the seeing eyes, one does not consider it a blessing because generally in the world, people have eyes. One thinks that something which is so common, how can it be a blessing? Its parable is that of an insolent slave who is devoid of etiquettes and gets beaten up all the time due to insolence. If the beating stops for some time, one would consider it a blessing and if it stops completely, one will become arrogant and will abandon gratitude. [This parable applies to everyone as everyone is a slave of God in need of having etiquettes and fidelity to one's Master, God, the Exalted.] The state of the people is such that they have gratitude on only that wealth (or peculiarity) that gives them some distinction over other people around them, whether that wealth is more or less. Other than that, they neglect all other blessings [and do not have gratitude for them].

Story of a Pauper's Complaint: A poor man complained to a man of the heart (Gnostic or intimate of God) about his poverty and having a large family [to support and not having enough means for doing that] and said, "I am very worried and perturbed due to my bad situation". The Gnostic asked him, "Can you take ten thousand *Dirhams* (an old gold currency and this amount is huge) and become blind?" He said no. Gnostic asked again, "Can you take ten thousand *Dirhams* and agree to becoming dumb?" He said no. Gnostic asked, "Do you like to take ten thousand *Dirhams* and become lame?" He again rejected that. Gnostic asked, "Would you like to take ten thousand *Dirhams* and lose your hand?" He did not accept that either. Gnostic asked, "Would you like to lose your mind for ten thousand *Dirhams*?" He said no. Then the Gnostic said, "Your Lord has granted you a wealth of fifty thousand *Dirhams*, even with that you are crying about your poverty and straitened circumstances!"

Ibn Samak (May God have mercy upon him) went to a *Caliph* (political authority) who at that time was holding a glass of water. The *caliph* asked him for advice. He said, "Suppose you are extremely thirsty and this glass [of water] is taken away from you and you are told that it will not be given back to you until you do not give up all of your wealth [and you do not have any other way of getting any water]. Will you give up all of your wealth for the sake of one glass of water?" He replied, "No doubt, I will give up all the wealth". Ibn Samak asked, "And if the condition is set to you to give up your entire

dominion?" *Caliph* said, "In that state, I will not hesitate to give up my entire dominion". He said, "The state of the dominion [you have] is such that it can be given up for a glass of water, then you should not be too happy about it". It is evident from this that at the time of thirst, a gulp of water is such a great blessing that even the dominion of the entire world can be sacrificed for the sake of its attainment.

Special Blessings of God: Since [human] temperaments consider those blessings as blessings that are specific and peculiar to one, they do not consider common blessings as blessings. That's why, we allude to some of these blessings that are in some respects, peculiar to you. There is no human being who does not have a few of these blessings, peculiar to one and are not found in all people, only one has them or very few people have a share in them. Therefore, there are three such matters in which every person is convinced of one's own peculiarity and specificity and praises oneself for that. They are intellect, inner qualities (character traits, mannerisms, inner dispositions, etc.) and knowledge.

As far as intellect is concerned, every person is satisfied with God that He has made one an extremely intelligent person of the world and has caused one to be born with that. Very few people are such that that they ask God for intellect [in their prayers and supplications], otherwise, generally people seem satisfied with the amount of intellect they have at their disposal. This is the peculiarity of intellect that one who is devoid of it looks satisfied with it and one who has it inherent in one also remains happy. Nevertheless, if an individual thinks that one is the most intelligent among all people and if [suppose] it is also a reality, then one should have gratitude to God who has bestowed one with this greatest blessing, and if one is not in reality, the most intelligent person in the world, even then, gratitude is incumbent upon one that this blessing is present in one.

The state of character traits is such that there is no person around who does not keep an eye on the faults of others and does not express one's disliking (revulsion) over them, although the same faults may be present in one. But one condemns other people's faults because one thinks of oneself as being free of them. If an individual in reality, is devoid of the fault that others are involved in, then one should have gratitude to God for them [instead of exulting in that and becoming boastful and arrogant] that He has protected one from that evil while others are involved in it.

As far as knowledge is concerned, every person is familiar with one's secret states [that are concealed from others] and hidden thoughts in the heart [that one is better off concealing from others]. Those states and thoughts are such that if they are revealed to people, all of one's reputation will get destroyed. Likewise, every person is knowledgeable about a few matters that no one else knows besides oneself. In this situation, everyone should thank God that He covered one's faults and [instead,] made one's good qualities prominent [and visible in public]. These are the three matters in which every person ascertains and confesses to one's own peculiarity and specificity.

Faith and Certitude is the Real Wealth: One whom God has bestowed with deep inner insight (*Baseerah*), should only be happy with the wealth of Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*), certitude (*Yaqeen*) [in God and eternal verities], and faith (*Iman*). Rather, we know such scholars whom if given all the wealth, helpers, and followers that are in control of rulers from west to east, and they are asked to accept them in return for their knowledge, and if they do not want to give up all of their knowledge then just give up a small fraction of that, they will not accept that offer. It is because they know that the blessing of knowledge is what brings about God's proximity and nearness in the Hereafter. Instead, if they are told, "The perfection you are expecting in the Hereafter will nevertheless be attained by you and there is no reduction expected in that, but what we want is that the pleasure you get as a result of indulgence in knowledge, give that to us and take the worldly pleasure in place of them". They will not agree to such an exchange. It is because they know that the pleasure of knowledge is eternal that will never cease, will remain forever, cannot be stolen, cannot be snatched, cannot be reduced, is a clean and pure pleasure that does not have filth admixed with it, while the worldly delights and pleasures have shortcomings. They have muddiness and worries, their fear is more than the satisfaction one gets in them, their sorrow is more than their pleasure, their sadness is more than their comfort. This [worldly] pleasure has remained just like the way we have described it and will remain like that in the future.

Worldly delights and pleasures have only been created so that the possessors of the faulty intellect get entrapped in their net and get indulged in their deception, and when they get entrapped by their deception, these delights and pleasures escape from them and refuse to be close to them. All these worries and hardships attack, because one got fooled by the deception of the sight. If one had used the intellect, lowered the gaze [for not looking at unnecessary things such as pomp and glitter of the world], and had considered the pleasure of looking [at unnecessary things] as lowly, one would have remained safe all of one's life. It is also not right to say this at all that those who avoid world (worldly pleasures, delights and indulgences that sap and consume all of one's inner being) are beset with the pain of patience [for staying away from worldly pleasures] because in reality, those who are inclined towards the world (worldliness) are beset with extreme pain (mental, emotional, psychological and spiritual suffering). Sometimes they want the world (worldly comforts, delights, and pleasures) but it runs far away from them. Sometimes, after immense struggle and exertion, they achieve the world (worldly comforts, delights, pleasures, and material success) but remain worried about safeguarding it. We accept that [it is fair to say that] those who avoid the world have to endure the hardship of patience after this hardship, but why do you forget the comfort that one is going to achieve? Those who run after the worldly pleasures are suffering here [in the world] and the suffering of the Hereafter is also awaiting them. They should recite the following verse over their lower selves (*Nafs*):

وَلَا تَهِنُوا۟ فِى ٱبْتِغَآءِ ٱلْقَوْمِ ۖ إِن تَكُونُوا۟ تَأْلَمُونَ فَإِنَّهُمْ يَأْلَمُونَ كَمَا تَأْلَمُونَ ۖ
وَتَرْجُونَ مِنَ ٱللَّهِ مَا لَا يَرْجُونَ ۗ

"And do not lose courage in going after the opposing nation (group) [to prevent their attacks on you]. If you are afflicted [with pain] then they are also afflicted as you are

afflicted. And you hope for such things from God that they do not hope for." (Qur'an, Chapter 4, Verse 104)

Cure for the Negligent and Heedless Heart: It is evident from this detail that the path of gratitude has become limited on people because they are unfamiliar with outer and inner, and common and special blessings. Here the question arises: What is the cure for this negligence and heedlessness? There must be some cure that can be prescribed and by that means, the negligence of the heedless hearts can be removed so that people can start to feel God's blessings. It is possible that after this realization, they start to have [Divine] gratitude.

The answer to this question is that the hearts that are not deprived of inner insight (*Baseerah*), their cure is that they contemplate on the [various] types of common blessings that we have alluded to in previous pages. Possessors of dull hearts do not consider a blessing as a blessing unless it is specific to them or it is taken away from them then restored back to them later.

The cure for such hearts is that they [make an effort to] always look at people who are lower than them [in worldly ranks and material possessions] and to follow in the footsteps of the *Sufis* (spiritual travelers and strivers in the Divine path for inner perfection and for the attainment of one's true purpose of life) whose daily routine was to visit hospitals, graveyards and prisons. They used to visit hospitals to see the patients being cured there and to find out about their illnesses and to see if they have the same illnesses in them [besides consoling their hearts and praying for them]. In case of not finding them in themselves, they used to have gratitude to God for granting them safety and health. They used to visit the prisons to see the state of the prisoners and punishments they were facing in order to have gratitude to God for saving them from sins, otherwise they could have been in place of the prisoners in jail. They used to visit graveyards (cemeteries) so that upon seeing the graves there, they would imagine the denizens of the graves whose most beloved desire is to somehow return to the world, even if it is for a day. Those who sinned [and are no longer in the world] desire to return [to the world] so that the sins they committed during their lives [on earth], could be atoned for them. Those who were obedient [servants of God who are no longer in the world] desire to return [to the world] because they want an increase in their righteous deeds as the Day of Judgment is a day of loss - obedient will realize their loss when they see that they were capable of much more than what they were able to accomplish and brought with them on that day. Alas! They wasted their precious time and spent thousands of precious moments in mere permissible things [instead of excelling in deeds of righteousness to please their Lord and increase in their proximity and Gnosis to Him]. The loss of the sinner [on the Day of Judgment] is self-evident.

When one goes to the graveyard and visits the graves of the deceased [to pay them respects, and to pray for their forgiveness from their Lord, and for ease in their lives after death], one should keep this in mind that all the people in those graves, whether they were good or bad, are all desirous of returning to the world to either expiate for their wrong deeds or to increase their good deeds. One should think, "I am fortunate

that God has continued to give me an opportunity to atone for my past wrongdoings and to increase my acts of obedience to Him. I should spend the remaining days of my life in God's obedience. Each and every breath of mine is God's blessing. I should appreciate this blessing [and act accordingly by using this blessing in works that are pleasing to my Lord that help me achieve the purpose of my life in the form of eternal happiness and everlasting success by means of Divine Gnosis and drawing near to Him in this very earthly life]". Human beings have gratitude for blessing only after understanding it. Therefore, if one [truly] understands the life as a blessing then certainly one would spend all remaining days of one's life in works for which one has been created for. Life, in fact, has been created for attaining the reliance or provisions (*Zaad*) for the Hereafter. If human being is appreciative of this blessing [of life], one would never become negligent of its purpose [and will have nothing but righteousness].

Five Aspects of Worldly Hardships: Whatever hardships and calamities that exist in the world such as poverty, disease and fear, there are five aspects in them for which an intelligent person should be happy about and have gratitude for them. One of these five aspects is that the hardship or illness that descended on one at this time, a far more severe calamity or fatal illness [than that] is possible because no one can interfere in Divinely ordained destiny. Suppose He doubles [or magnifies the intensity of] a calamity or increases the severity of an illness then who can do anything about it? One cannot prohibit God from doing so or create obstacles in His way. Hence, one should have gratitude thinking that out of Divine benevolence and mercy, He did not send a bigger calamity.

Second aspect is that, this hardship or calamity descended in worldly matters. It was also possible that a calamity would have descended in your faith causing tremendous damage therein. Therefore, when a man told Sahl bin Abdullah al-Tustari (May God have mercy upon him) that thieves had entered his house and escaped after looting his possessions, Sahl said, "Have gratitude to God! If Satan had entered instead of thief, and had entered in your heart instead of your home and had ruined your belief in God and His Oneness (*Tawheed*) then what you would have done?" That's why, Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) used to seek Divine protection in these words, "O God! Do not afflict [me] with a calamity related to my faith". Umar bin al-Khattab (May God be pleased with him) said, "No hardship befalls me that did not have four Divine blessings in it: first, it did not happen in my path to God (*Deen*); second, it is not more than what it is in amount; third, I am not being deprived of accepting it [as God's decree]; fourth, I have expectation of Divine recompense for it [for bearing it with patience]".

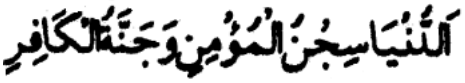
Third aspect or reason for gratitude on hardships is that the punishment for every sin can be delayed till the Hereafter and this is God's kindness that He sent a hardship in the world to compensate for that sin. Then the worldly hardships sometimes remain small and light, but the punishment of the Hereafter is perpetual, but if not perpetual, there is no reduction in that. In the world, there is still some means of satisfaction [when people are enduring hardships] but in the Hereafter, all means of satisfaction for people facing punishments for their worldly wrongdoings are dissevered, that's why, there won't

be a reduction [in Divine retribution] there. It is also proven in prophetic narrations that the person enduring [Divine] punishment in the world [for their sins] will not get punished in the Hereafter. Fourth aspect or reason for gratitude on hardships is that one should think, "The hardship that had befallen me was written in the Preserved Tablet (ordained by Divine decree), it was bound to come, so it has come. It was possible that this calamity would have been bigger than what has come. So, what has not happened is a blessing for me and I should have gratitude to God for that". Fifth aspect or reason [for gratitude on a hardship] is that the Divine recompense for hardship is [far] greater than the hardship itself.

Calamities and Hardships of the World are [Means of Success or] Pathways to the Hereafter: Hardships of the world are [means of success or] pathways to the Hereafter for two reasons. First reason is that the basis on which a patient is given a bitter medicine and kids are prevented from playing, is that the bitter medicine is a blessing for the patient because one can find comfort after this hardship. Similarly, preventing kids from playing [all the time] is a blessing for the kid because if one is given total freedom to play [to heart's desire], then one will be deprived from [acquiring] knowledge and etiquettes and will be at a loss for the rest of the life. Same is the state of wealth, property, family and relatives, friends, organs, etc. All these things are beloved to a human being. Sometimes, one gets destroyed because of them, although intellect is an extremely precious and excellent thing but even because of it, one has to undergo destruction. On the Day of Judgment, they would wish to be insane or children so they would not have adulterated the path to God with their intellects. It is not necessary to only have [the aspect of] evil in these means. There can be betterment in them for human beings especially with respect to the Divine path (*Deen*). If one considers that these matters [wealth, property, family and relatives, friends, organs, etc.] are causes of betterment in my path to God, even then one should have gratitude to God, because God's wisdom is immense and He is well-aware of what's better for His servants better than them. On the Day of Judgment, when servants [of God] will see that they are being rewarded for the hardships and calamities they endured in the world, they will have gratitude to God then. Hardships and calamities sent by God are methods of teaching one the proper etiquettes [of life and the path to God]. God's largesse and kindness to His servants is far greater than parents' kindness and benevolence on their children, and is far completer and more enduring.

Second reason [as to why hardships of the world are pathways to the Hereafter] is that the topmost among fatal mistakes [of human beings] is the love of the world (worldliness or worldly attachments and entanglements), and the topmost among the causes of salvation is to keep the heart away from the love of the world. If worldly blessings would have been achieved without seeking them and no hardship would have come in the way of attaining them then hearts would have inclined towards the world, and had been attached to the worldly means to the extent that world would have become like paradise for them. When death and moments of separation [from the world] would have come closer, the heart would not have endured separation from it. However, if hardships keep coming from time to time and worries are continually dealt with, then heart gets bored with the world and does not get attached to it. Instead, relentless hardships

cause one to consider the world as a jail and leaving this world [at the time of death] becomes like getting released from jail [and finding liberation in that]. Hence, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) has said:



"World is a prison for the believer and a paradise for the unbeliever". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him])

A person is termed unbeliever when one avoids God and is only seeking after the world, is satisfied for achieving it, and is happy with finding its pleasures. Believer is one whose heart is estranged from the world and is busy striving to get freedom from this prison. Unbelief (*Kufr*) is both apparent and secret. To the extent the love of the world remains in the heart, to that extent the ascribing of associates with God (*Shirk*) remains secret (hidden) [in the depths of the heart]. The absolute monotheist is the one who makes the Absolute One (God), one's beloved.

These are the reasons due to which one should have happiness for the hardships. Having remorse for the hardships is a natural thing. Its parable is that of needing an injection. If someone [who is qualified to administer it] does it for free or some patient needs to take a bitter medicine, then obviously, there is pain in getting the injection and in taking a bitter medicine. Despite that, one thanks the person administering injection and the physician. Its reason is that by the side of this hardship, there is also happiness, in other words, one gets rid of one's illness. That's why, after taking the injection and bitter medicine, where one has pain, one also has happiness. Hardships of the world should be considered like that. They resemble bitter medicines and surgery on the body. There is temporary pain caused by them but in the final end, one gets relief and comfort.

Degrees of Patience and Gratitude: Patience has a lot of degrees. Highest degree is to consider hardship as bad, and do not complain about it. After all degrees of patience encompassing all high and low degrees, is the degree of acceptance of Divine will (*Rida*), after that it is the degree of having gratitude to God on hardships. The reason for that is, in patience there is a feeling of pain, it is possible to not have either pain or any happiness in acceptance of Divine will (*Rida*), while gratitude cannot be devoid of happiness. Just like patience has innumerable degrees, gratitude also has innumerable degrees. We have only mentioned its highest degree. There are many degrees of patience. Similarly, gratitude also has many degrees. We have [only] explained its highest degree. It is to ascertain this reality that all blessings are obtained from God without any due right, to know that expressing gratitude to God is also a blessing, to remain humble, all these matters are gratitude and they are different from each other in terms of degrees. Similarly, to object to things less, treating the Giver with beautiful etiquettes, accepting all blessings well, considering small blessings as big, etc. are all gratitude. In summary, all works (deeds) and spiritual states are included in patience and gratitude and they are innumerable and are different from each other in degrees.

Chapter 13 – Having Fear of God as a Resolute Restraint Against all Wrongs One is Capable of and Having Hope in God as an Instrument of Positivity and Optimism

Human actions need to be reined in as they can easily get out of control causing sufferings to individuals, fellow human beings, and the world at large. Inner and outer restraints for wrongs one is capable of against oneself and others are needed. Being fearful of God, embedded deep within one's heart, is a tremendous inner restraint against all forms of wrongdoings and negativities in thoughts, words, and deeds. Knowing that God is ever watchful of every fiber of our being, knowing even our innermost thoughts and feelings, and that God is ever capable of impeding our wrong actions and taking us to task for anything negative emanating from us, is a moral restraint that prevents us from all negativities – in thoughts, words, feelings, deeds, and state of the being.

The mirror image of fear of God is hope in God. It's a source of immense inner help and strength in situations of despair and sorrow. Knowing that God is capable of setting everything right, even in seemingly hopeless situations, is a source of immense encouragement and inspiration that propels one towards positive actions in difficult situations, and setting things right after they have been set wrong. Fear and hope need to be balanced so that one restrains an individual from negativities while other propels one towards positivity. Ghazali has provided a masterful treatment of this key subject in the third book in the fourth volume or quarter of his *magnum opus* "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God" that is presented in condensed form as follows [19]:

Let it be known that fear [of God] (*Khawf*) and hope [in God] (*Rija*) are two such wings, that with their help, the intimates of God fly and ascend to high [spiritual] stations. They are two such rides that by riding on them, the dangerous paths of the Hereafter are traversed. The destination of God's intimacy and abode of Paradise are located at great [spiritual] distance and paths [leading to them] are replete with dangers, making [spiritual] travelers who tread these paths tired, putting [bodily] organs and limbs in hardships, the ride of hope [with God] is imperative to reach this destination and [final] station [in one's spiritual journey marked with incessant spiritual strivings]. Similarly, safeguarding against the horrible fire of Hell and tragic punishment [in the Hereafter for one's own wrongdoings] is not possible without fear [of God]. Hence, the reality of both, their excellences, the [apparent] contradiction between the two and combining them is necessary to explain. Hence, this book [on fear and hope] is being divided into two chapters. Firstly, we will explain the state of hope [with God] and then in the second chapter, we will explain the state of fear [of God].

Reality of Hope, its Excellence, Medicine for Hope and Method of Acquiring it

Reality of Hope: Let it be known that hope is a station (*Maqaam*) from among the stations of the spiritual travelers and strivers (*Salikeen*), and is a state from among the states of the seekers [of God]. If a [inner] quality of a person stays and gets established [in one's soul] then it is called a "station" (*Maqaam*) and if the quality is temporary and dissipates quickly then it called a "state" (*Haal*). The inner qualities of the heart have this division [of stations and states that are important terminologies of spirituality]. State is called state because it changes quickly, and this is experienced with all the qualities of the heart. Hope is completed by means of [inner spiritual] state, knowledge and actions - all three of them - because knowledge is the cause of state and state is the cause of [correct spiritual and bodily] actions but on the whole, hope is only the name of a state. Details of this is that the thing you find either as disliked (undesirable) or beloved (desirable) is not free of three states - it will either exist in the present, or had existed in the past, or you are waiting for it in the future. If a thought occurs in your heart about an existence that has happened in the past, it is referred to as remembrance or mentioning. If it exists in the present, it is termed as perception and if its existence is expected in the future and it dominates your heart, it is termed as expectation and wait. If the thing that is being expected or waited for [in the future] is undesirable and it causes pain in the heart, it is called fear (*Khawf*) and if it is desirable and you find pleasure and happiness in waiting for it, it is then referred to as hope (*Rija*). It is learned from this that hope (*Rija*) is the name of the thing that makes you happy [while] waiting for it [to happen in the future] and it is beloved to you. However, if you are waiting for something that is beloved to you and you feel happy with the thought of getting it, then certainly you would have such resources that by their means, you would reach the beloved. If it is like this, then it is hope (*Rija*) and if you do not possess the means [for reaching it] and you are just expecting the meeting with the beloved [or finding what you want] then it is self-deception and foolishness. If the existence or non-existence of means is not known, such a wait is referred to as a wish or vain desire (*Tamanna*) because a wait without reason is found in it.

Where is Hope Applicable? Hope and fear will apply on things whose existence is not certain, instead it is doubtful, and hope does not apply on things whose existence is certain. For example, it will not be right to say about sunrise that, "I am hopeful for the sunrise", because the existence of both sunrise and sunset is certain, however, it is right to say that, "I have hope for the rain or have fear about the drought [in future]".

This reality is revealed [and is clearly evident] to the people of the heart (illumined and enlightened individuals) that world is the farmland of the Hereafter and the parable of the heart is like that of the land, faith is like that of seeds, Divine obedience is like that of tilling the land, cleaning it [by removing unwanted growth like weeds], digging water channels and irrigating farms with them; heart that is immersed in the world and indulged in its pleasures is like that of a barren land that does not retain the seeds [or

germinate them], Day of Judgment is the day of reaping the harvest because you will harvest on that day exactly what have sown [or planted] in the worldly life. The [good] harvest of the Hereafter is not possible without the seeds of faith [in God and eternal verities], and faith benefits very little in the presence of the evil of the heart and bad morals, manners, character traits and inner dispositions. Just like no seed stays (germinates) in a barren land, no matter how much it is irrigated with water, that's why, if a servant [of God, i.e., human being] has hope for [Divine] forgiveness, one should construe one's hope on the hope of a farmer. Therefore, a farmer who selects good (fertile) land for farming, puts good seeds in it and employs all possible means so that the seeds rise up in the form of [healthy] plants [or crops] from beneath the surface of the earth, gets [the farmland] nourished or irrigated (watered) on time, removes weeds and removes all impediments [to growth] that impact the growth of plants or harm the crop, after that the farmer has this expectation from God that He will protect one's cultivation from heavenly and earthy catastrophes, then such a wait and expectation is called hope. If one had sown seeds in a hard and rocky land located at an elevation where there was no means to irrigate it, as water could not have reached there, furthermore one did not nurture it and instead, started waiting for harvesting the crop, then this is not [a justified] waiting, instead, it is pride and foolishness and it is not hope [as one failed to employ all means possible to accomplish it to justify hope]. Similarly, if one sowed seeds in a good [fertile] land but exercised negligence with all subsequent stages [of cultivation], did not water it, instead waited for rainfall and expected rain in such weather conditions or locations where either it does not rain or it rains but it's not sufficient for fulfilling all the needs of farming, then such a wait is called [vain] desire (*Tamanna*) and it is not hope (*Rija*).

It is known from this detail that [the term] hope is applicable only for the wait of that beloved [or desirable thing] for which all means are employed that are within the circle of jurisdiction of a servant, and only those means have remained (left out) that are outside the jurisdiction of the servant, and that [means] is the Grace of God such that if it's included [in all matters], all impediments and spoilers stay away [from those matters]. Such is the state of the believing servant [of God] - if one sows the seeds of faith in the land of the heart, irrigates it with the water of [Divine] worship, protects it from the thorns of bad morals, manners, inner character traits and dispositions (*Su ul-Khulq*), and has this expectation from the Grace of God that one's faith will remain until one's death, and the crop of the heart gets ready for harvesting on the Day of Judgment. If it's like that, then this waiting is hope (*Rija*) in the true sense and is an excellent quality (inner trait). This hope will make one retain one's faith and [will make one] scrupulously nurture it by continuously acting upon all means of nurturing to ensure salvation at the time of [Divine] Gnosis. However, if one has sown the seeds in the land of the heart but did not care for it afterwards, until it gets dried up due to not watering it or got ruined due to excessive rainfall or weeds and thorns of one's bad morals, manners, inner character traits and dispositions, overtook the crop, or pests of worldly pleasures attacked it, and despite all these acts of negligence and shortcomings, one remained awaited and expectant of forgiveness then this wait and expectation is foolishness and arrogance. Hence, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

اَلْاَحْمَقُ مَنْ اَتْبَعَ نَفْسَهٗ هَوَاهَا وَتَمَنّٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ

"Foolish is the one who makes one's self, subservient to one's low desires and then has expectations from God".

God says:

فَخَلَفَ مِنۢ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ أَضَاعُوا۟ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ وَٱتَّبَعُوا۟ ٱلشَّهَوَٰتِ ۖ فَسَوْفَ يَلْقَوْنَ غَيًّا

"After them (the Prophets and their truthful followers), such unworthy people (unworthy of prophetic inheritance of spiritual knowledge and wisdom) were born who ruined their prayers and followed base and low desires from their lower self. Such people will soon see faults [emanating from their own wrongdoings]." (Qur'an, Chapter 19, Verse 59)

Nevertheless, a servant [of God, i.e., a human being] who makes efforts in Divine obedience and refrains from sins, is deserving of hope for the completion of [Divine] blessings out of God's benevolence and largesse, and the completion of blessings is that one enters into the Paradise. A sinner who repents and atones and expiates for one's wrongdoings, has the right to have hope for acceptance of one's repentance. If one thinks of one's sins before repentance as bad, is pleased with one's good deeds, condemns one's lower self (*Nafs*) [for its wrongdoings and evil lurking within it], is desirous of repentance, then one should have hope for being [Divinely] granted the ability for repentance, because considering sins as bad and desiring repentance are means of propelling one towards repentance. The stage of hope comes after perfection of means [of hope] as Qur'an says:

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ وَٱلَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا۟ وَجَٰهَدُوا۟ فِى سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ ۙ أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ يَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَ ٱللَّهِ

"Verily, those who have faith and those who emigrated (emigration is both outer and inner as inner emigration is from evil to good, from low character to high character, from materialistic to immaterial or spiritual) and strived in the path of God, they are the ones who are candidates of hope for God's mercy." (Qur'an, Chapter 2, Verse 218)

The meaning of this verse is that these are the very people who possess the right of hope for Divine mercy, it does not mean that hope is specific to these people, because there are people other than them who have hope, although they do not possess the right to hope as this right is only possessed by them. But the one who is immersed in revulsive things from head to toe, neither considers one's self as bad nor has the determination for repentance and returning to God, if such a person hopes for [Divine] forgiveness, it is like an imbecile who sows seeds in a barren land and resolves to neither water it nor clean it up. Yahya ibn Mu'adh (May God have mercy upon him) said, "The worst self-deception (delusion) to me is that an individual keeps sinning without shame and remorse, in the hope of forgiveness, expects closeness to God without any [act of Divine] obedience, waits for fruits of Paradise after planting seeds of fire, asks for the abode of the obedient [servants of God] (i.e., Paradise) by means of sins and wrongdoings, seeks Divine recompense without any actions [that make one

worthy of it], and despite oppression and excessiveness [in terms of violating and usurping other people's rights] is [fallaciously] desirous of good dealing from God".

Striving After Hope: We have shed a great deal of light on the reality of hope. If it is summarized, the crux of the matter is that it is a state that arises as a result of knowledge after the occurrence of most of the means [leading up to it]. The demand of this state is that the means that have not been fulfilled, one should strive in all possible ways in the completion (utilization) of all remaining means. In the example of farming, one who sows good seeds in fertile land, irrigates it according to the need, the hope of such a person would be true and will convince one to look after that land (farm) by cleaning up any weeds and thorns that have grown therein, water it regularly, and not have any negligence until the harvesting. Its reason is that the opposite of hope is despair and hopelessness, if one is despair of something, one does not put oneself in hardship by struggling for it. Only that person struggles who has hope for getting something. Therefore, one who knows that one's land is infertile, seeds are useless, and water is outside the reach of that land, then one will certainly stay away from the upkeeping of that land. Hope is praiseworthy because it incites one for action, and despair is condemnable because it prevents one from doing anything (appropriate actions). Fear [of God] is not the opposite of hope [in God], instead, it is its partner in the journey of spiritual striving (*Suluk*), rather it's an agent of action. However, its method is different - hope has desire [to do something] in it and fear has prevention [of wrongdoings] in it. If someone has the state of hope in oneself, it demands more strivings in good deeds and perseverance in acts of Divine obedience irrespective of changes to inner spiritual states. Spiritual strivings over an extended timeframe and focusing on God by means of perseverance in good actions, will cause one to find pleasure in entreaties to God and one will ask God for one's needs with softness (humility) and connectedness. If one does not have this state, it should be understood that one is away from the [spiritual] station of hope [in God] and instead, is beset in the canyon of arrogance and [vain] desire (*Tamanna*). These are the details about hope, knowledge that results in hope, and actions that are born out of hope.

Excellence of Hope and Persuasions for Having Hope: Let it be known that actions accompanied with hope [in God] are superior to actions done with fear [of God] because only that person is closer to God who loves Him more and love increases with hope. Its parable is like that of two kings, among them, one is served out of hope for his generosity and the other one is served out of his fear. It is evident that the first one will be loved more than the second one. Hence, there are many persuasions in the Divine law for having hope (*Rija*) and good opinion about God (*Husn al-Dhun*) at the time of one's death. God has said:

لَا تَقْنَطُوا۟ مِن رَّحْمَةِ ٱللَّهِ

"Do not despair of God's mercy!" (Qur'an, Chapter 39, Verse 53)

In this verse, despair has been completely forbidden [by means of this Divine commandment]. In the circumstances of Prophet Jacob (Peace and blessings of God be upon him), it has been transmitted that God sent a Divine revelation asking him, "Do

you know why I have put a separation between you and Joseph (his dearest of all sons)? Because you told his brothers [when they asked you to let Joseph (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) go out with them to play, out of a ploy to banish him forever out of sheer jealousy]:

وَأَخَافُ أَن يَأْكُلَهُ ٱلذِّئْبُ وَأَنتُمْ عَنْهُ غَٰفِلُونَ

'I am afraid that he may get eaten up by a wolf while you [all] are negligent of him [due to play].' (Qur'an, Chapter 12, Verse 13)

Why were you afraid of the wolf and did not have hope in Me? You looked at the negligence of Joseph's brothers, why did you not look at My protection?"

In a *Hadith Qudsi* (tradition of Prophet Muhammad [Peace and blessings of God be upon him] in which he transmitted from God), God said:

أَنَا عِنْدَ ظَنِّ عَبْدِي بِي فَلْيَظُنَّ بِي مَا شَاءَ

"I am with my servant as My servant thinks of Me (My dealings with a human being are according to one's opinion of Me, therefore, one should have good opinion of God and expect the best from Him, but one should back up one's good opinion of God with efforts and endeavors that are pleasing to Him), so one should have whatever opinion one wants to have of Me". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Ibn Hibban* on the authority of Wathila ibn al-Asqa (May God be pleased with him)]

Once Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) went to a man who was in the throes of death and asked him, "What state do you find yourself in?" He replied, "I find in my heart fear for the sins [I have committed] and hope for Lord's mercy". Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said, "A person in whose heart both of these things (hope and fear) combine, God bestows upon such a person according to one's hopes [from Him] and protects one from things one is afraid of". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Tirmidhi, Nasa'i* and *Ibn Majah* on the authority of Anas (May God be pleased with him)]

A man was in [a state of] intense despair due to excessiveness of sins. Ali (May God be pleased with him) said to him, "Your biggest sin is that you are despair of God's mercy". According to a prophetic narration, God sent a Divine revelation to Prophet David (Peace and blessings of God be upon him), "Love Me and love the one who loves Me and make Me beloved among people". He asked, "How should I make You beloved among people?" God replied, "Mention me well among people and mention My favors and blessings and remind them of that so that they remain familiar only with My favors". Some people saw Yahya ibn Aktham (May God have mercy upon him) in their dreams after his death. He was asked, "How did God treat you [after your death]?" He replied, "God made me stand before Him and said, 'O bad old man! You committed such and such sins!' Upon hearing my register of deeds [I did during my lifetime], I was overpowered by the Divine awe. Then I said, 'O God! Had it not been narrated in the *Hadith* (narration of Prophet Muhammad [Peace and blessings of God be upon him]) about You like this?' God asked, 'What has been narrated?' I replied, 'Abdul Razzaq

narrated to me, he narrated from Moammar who narrated from Zehri who narrated from [Prophetic companion] Anas (May God be pleased with him) who narrated from Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) that he heard from [Archangel] Gabriel that You have said,

أَنَا عِنْدَ ظَنِّ عَبْدِي بِي فَلْيَظُنَّ بِي مَا شَاءَ

'I am with My servant as My servant thinks of Me so one should have whatever opinion one wants to have of Me', and I had this conjecture (opinion or expectation) about You that You will not punish me'. God, the Majestic, the Honored, replied, 'Gabriel told the truth, My prophet told the truth, Anas, Moammar and Zehri all told the truth, you also say the truth'. Then I was granted a robe of honor and heavenly servants led me to Paradise. At that time, I said [to myself], 'This is what's called happiness!'"

Method and Way of Acquiring Hope: Let it be known that hope is needed by two persons. First is the one who is dominated by sadness and despair and [as a result of that,] one abandons worship. Second is the one who is dominated with fear [of God] and [as a result of that,] one persists (endures) so much in worship that one becomes disturbed and make one's family disturbed as well. Both individuals have exceeded the bounds of moderation and are inclined towards [two opposite] extremes. Both need such a cure that will bring them to [the path of] moderation. But that self-deluded sinner who is desirous of [Divine] forgiveness despite abandoning [Divine] obedience without doing anything that will make one deserving of forgiveness, hope is fatal for such a one. Just like honey is a cure for people of cold temperament but is harmful for people of hot temperament. Only fear [of God] is beneficial for such a person or such means that engender fear. That is the reason why a person who advises and counsels people should keep an eye on the illness and the causes of [that] illness, and should administer cure by the opposite of every illness, and not by something that would increase the illness instead of making it better. It is because the objective is moderation and in every [human] quality and trait, the degree of moderation has been liked and this degree is the best. If a [human] quality or trait is deviating from the degree of moderation, whether towards excessiveness or paucity, that's where the need for cure is so that it returns back to the degree of moderation. A cure that makes it deviate further from the degree of moderation is not needed.

Ali (May God be pleased with him) said, "A scholar is someone who neither makes people despair of God's mercy nor makes them fearless of God taking them to task [for reckoning]". We are convinced of narrating the causes of hope but not for every individual, rather only for the one who has despaired of God's mercy or for the one who is dominated with fear of God. Qur'an and prophetic narrations convey the same meaning as both include teachings based on fear and hope that constitute all means for curing different types of patients. The knowledge of these means and the method of using them [to administer cure] has been [Divinely] conveyed to scholars who are the heirs of the prophets, so that according to [individual and specific] needs, they can use these means, like wise and experienced physicians and suggest suitable cure for the patient, and not like a foolish and ignorant physician who considers all medicines as effective for every ailment, no matter what that ailment is.

Reality of Fear

Reality of Fear: Let it be known that fear is that pain and aggravation in the heart that is born out of the thought of an expected hardship in the future. In the explanation of hope, the reality of fear has also been clarified. One who has longing and familiarity with God, truth dominates one's heart, and is immersed at all times in witnessing the Divine beauty, that's why, one is not attentive towards the future and [consequently,] one does neither have the fear nor the hope [for the future] in the heart, instead, one's [inner] state becomes superior to both the states of fear and hope. It is because these two states [of fear and hope] are like two reins that do not let the wild horse of the lower self (*Nafs*) deviate from moderation, and the lack of fear and hope in the heart advocates for subservience of the lower self [to God]. Wasti (May God have mercy upon him) said, "Fear is a veil between God and His servant". He also said, "If truth is revealed to the hearts, there will not be any room left for either hope or fear". Therefore, if a lover's heart has fear of separation [from the Beloved] in it during the witnessing of the Beloved, one will not be able to enjoy the vision of Beloved's beauty and one's vision will remain deficient, although the pinnacle of all [spiritual] stations (*Maqamaat*) is to have perpetual [Divine] vision, and no hope of profit (benefit) and fear of harm severs it.

Composition of Ingredients for Fear: Similar to hope, fear is also composed of three things: knowledge, [inner] state [of being], and actions. Knowledge refers to the perception of the cause that inflicts harm. For example, someone expressed disrespect to a king or rebelled against the royal commandment and later got arrested and presented before the king. In this situation, one would certainly have the fear of getting killed, although, it is also possible that king may forgive one, or one gets released somehow but one will certainly have the fear of getting killed in one's heart. Then that fear will be strong in proportion to the strength of reasons that would warrant that killing, for example, the severity of the crime, or king harboring enmity and jealousy, or king having a revengeful temperament, or being surrounded with people who would incite the king to take revenge, or being deprived of an intercessor, or being deprived of all the resources that would end king's rage or extinguish the fire of revenge in the heart. If all these reasons converge and the accused is knowledgeable about them as well then, no doubt, the fear of getting killed will be very strong in one's heart. To the extent, these causes will be weak or less, to that extent the pain of fear will be less.

Sometimes, the fearful person is not afraid because one has committed a crime, rather some characteristic of the person being feared is instilling fear in one. For example, if someone gets trapped in the claws of a ferocious beast, will certainly fear that beast because one is aware of its bestial nature and characteristic, and one knows that bestiality is its beloved trait, even though this trait is discretionary (non-compulsive) because sometimes the beast does not harm its prey and passes by it without causing harm. Sometimes, there is fear from a trait that is non-discretionary (compulsive) and is

inherent in the nature of the feared like one falling into fast flowing water or getting trapped in a fire. Human being is afraid of water and fire because water's inherent nature is to drown, and fire's inherent nature is to burn.

In summary, the deeper understanding of the causes of evil, creates irritation and aggravation in the heart and pain in the inner being. This aggravation and inner pain are termed as fear. Similarly, sometimes fearing God is due to the Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*) of God's Being and attributes such as [the knowledge that] if He annihilates the whole world, He would neither care nor can anyone stop Him from doing that or castigate Him for this annihilation. Sometimes, a servant [of God, i.e., a human being] is afraid due to one's sins and sometimes these two get combined together [to cause the state of fear]. Then to the extent this certitude gets solidified that whatever is there, is in God's hand, He is not in need of anything or anyone, whatever He does, there is no one to take Him to task for, while the servants (human beings) will go through the stages of [Divine] accountability in all circumstances, to that extent fear will increase. It is concluded from this that one who is more familiar with one's self has more fear of God. That's why, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) has said:

وَاللّٰہِ اِنِّی لَاَخْشَاکُمْ لِلّٰہِ وَاَتْقَاکُمْ لَہٗ

"By God! I am the most fearful of God amongst you all". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Sahih Bukhari* on the authority of Anas (May God be pleased with him)]

This is the reason why the following has been stated in the Qur'an:

إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى ٱللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ ٱلْعُلَمَٰٓؤُا۟

"Only those from among the servants of God, who have been endowed with knowledge, have [pious awe, reverence and] fear of God [as true knowledge leads of God's Gnosis that imbues Divine Presence making it impossible for its possessor to indulge in thoughts, feelings, words, deeds, and the state of being, inimical to that lofty spiritual state]." (Qur'an, Chapter 35, Verse 28)

Effects of Fear [of God]: When this Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*) [of God's Being and Attributes and of one's sins] is completed, it engenders fear in one's heart and there is an aggravation in one's inner being then the effects of this aggravation transfer from the heart to other organs of the body. This aggravation and fear are manifested in the form of physical weakness, paleness, crying, etc. Sometimes the heat of this state has so much effect that it is converted into the state of despair and hopelessness. Bodily organs have this effect of fear that they are prevented from sins and made subservient to acts of obedience in order to expiate for past mistakes, and to prepare well for future [to lead a life of moral and ethical rectitude]. Hence, it is said that a person of [God] fear is not the one who weeps and wipes off one's tears but it is the one who abandons the thing that makes one fearful of [Divine] punishment. Abu al-Qasim Hakeem (May God have mercy upon him) said, "One who is afraid of something, runs away from it but one who has fear of God, takes refuge in His merciful embrace". Dhun Noon al-Misri (May God have mercy upon him) was asked, "When is a servant fearful [of God]?" He

replied, "When one becomes like a patient whose illness is dangerous and prevents harmful foods due to fear of death [caused by exacerbating one's illness due to lack of prevention against harmful things]". The effect of fear [of God] on one's traits (characteristics and inner qualities) is that the lusts get eradicated and worldly pleasures become lowly [in one's eyes] to the extent that all the sins that were previously beloved to one, start to look bad. Just like one who likes honey but this inclination turns into abhorrence upon finding out that poison is mixed in it, similarly, the heat of [God] fear burns the lusts, [bodily] organs develop [civilized] etiquettes, heart develops qualities like humility, humbleness, piety, reprehensible qualities like arrogance, enmity, jealousy get removed. One's full focus turns towards one's [God] fear and one does not have any sense left to cast a glance elsewhere. One gets busy with spiritual struggle (*Mujahada*), self-examination, or taking oneself to task for one's wrongdoings (*Muhasaba*), and contemplation of the Divine (*Muraqaba*) at all times. Each and every moment one has, each and every step one takes, and each and every word one utters, becomes so precious that one does not waste them. Instead, one becomes very protective about them [by safeguarding them to avoid losing them]. One's state becomes like the state of one who gets entrapped in the claws of a ferocious beast and does not know if one can escape from it by taking advantage of any momentary negligence on its part or will die in its claws while becoming its food. If one is entrapped in a situation like that then one's heart and mind, and outer and inner beings are only obsessed with a way to find freedom, one does not have any other thought even occur to one's mind [in that state]. Such is the state of the person who is dominated with fear [of God]. Some prophetic companions (*Sahaba*) and their followers (*Taba'een*) had the same exact state that fear [of God] reigned supreme on every vein and every fiber of their being.

Degrees of Fear [of God] in Actions: To the extent one's fear is strong, the Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*) of God's attribute of Majesty and understanding of the faults of lower self are there, to that extent the spiritual struggle (*Mujahada*), self-examination or taking oneself to task for one's wrongdoings (*Muhasaba*), and contemplation of the Divine (*Muraqaba*) are stronger. The lowest rank of the effects of fear in one's actions is that one stays away from doing things that are forbidden (*Haram*) by the injunctions of the Divine law. Staying away from the prohibitions of the Divine law is called scrupulousness (*Wara'*). If fear is firm, one will stay away even from matters that have the [mere] possibility of being forbidden in the Divine law, in other words, one stays sway even from those matters that are not known for sure to be forbidden and thus are doubtful. This degree [of God-fear] is called "*Taqwa*" (pious awe, reverence, and fear of God) which means that one abandons doubtful matters and acts upon matters that are certain to be permissible. Sometimes, one leaves those matters that are seemingly fine but leaves them because of the fear that they may be doubtful. This degree [of God-fear] is called "*Sidq fi al-Taqwa*" (inner truthfulness and sincerity in pious awe, reverence, and fear of God). If one takes this degree to the next level by using only the things that are truly needed [and are certain to be permissible], for example, one does not build an extra house that one is not going to live in, one does not accumulate food that one does not consume, one does not incline towards worldliness, and one knows that world is something one will be separated from, and [consequently,] does not waste even a

single breath in thinking about anything other than God, then this degree is called "*Sidq*" (truthfulness or total dedication to the truth). It is perfectly suitable to call such a person "*Siddiq*" (a person of truth or a Gnostic or intimate and friend of God). According to this arrangement, truthfulness (*Sidq*) is included in God-fear (*Taqwa*) and God-fear is included in scrupulousness (*Wara'*) and scrupulousness includes chastity and purity (*Iffah*) which is the name of refraining from the instigators of lusts.

Fear of God is the Objective: In reality, fear of God is the objective. If God's purpose was not to make [His servants] fearful of His Being then He would neither have allowed the overpowering of His servants to commit sins, nor He would have made it easy for them to commit sins, and He would not have provided them means to commit sins. It is because providing means of sins is tantamount to casting one away from Divine mercy, then there was no sin committed by the servant before the [first] sin on whose basis one would have been declared as deserving of sin and means of sins made easy for one. Similarly, before the [first act of] obedience, the servant had no righteous deed that would have made one deserving of [more] righteous deeds and to illumine for one the path of righteousness. All of these are the secrets of Divinely ordained destiny whether one agrees to it or not. The unattachment [to anything] of that Being is such that without any prior reason, He bestowed the loftiest of all the ranks ever granted to any human being to Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) without any prior reason, so that no one from amongst the creations can claim to compete with him, on the other hand, He made Abu Jahl reach the lowest of the low rank without any [prior] fault of his. The Being whose state of obliviousness [and non-attachment to anyone or anything] is such, it is imperative to be fearful of His Majesty and Grandeur.

Excellence of God-Fear and its Exhortations: Excellence of fear [of God] is proven from both logical deduction (*Qayas*) as well as from Qur'anic verses and prophetic traditions. The way of logical deduction to see the excellence of a thing, is to see how much it helps with propelling one towards eternal happiness and endless triumph (*Sa'adah*) of the Divine vision because it is the real objective of a believing servant [of God]. That's why, to the extent something can help one reach eternal happiness and everlasting success, to that extent it will have the level of excellence.

It has been explained before that meeting with God in the Hereafter and acquisition of eternal happiness and everlasting success (*Sa'adah*) is not possible without the love and longing for Him, and love is not attained without Divine Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*), and Divine Gnosis is not attained without perpetuity of Divine remembrance, and in order to have perseverance with Divine remembrance (*Dhikr*) and contemplation (*Fikr*), it is imperative to have the detachment of the heart from the world, and attachment of the heart to the world is only severed when the servant abandons the worldly pleasures and lusts, and to eradicate the lusts, one needs the fire of fear [of God]. Fear [of God] is that fire that burns the lusts to ashes, that's why, only that fear will be superior that burns the lusts, protects one from sins, and exhorts one to [Divine] obedience. Then to the extent lusts get burned, sins will get reduced and to the extent [Divine] obedience appears (increases), to that extent it (eternal happiness and everlasting success) will be superior. This is the reality of differences in the degrees of God-fear. Why is fear [of

God] superior? Because a servant attains through it, the character traits like chastity, purity, scrupulousness, humility, and spiritual strivings. The excellence of these character traits cannot be doubted. Thus, excellence of fear is proven from both logical deduction as well as from [Divine] verses and traditions.

Verses and Traditions in the Excellence of Fear [of God]: There are innumerable [prophetic] traditions in the excellence of fear. It is enough to know regarding the excellence of fear [of God] that God accumulated all four [spiritual] stations leading to Paradise, namely [Divine] guidance, [Divine] mercy, [Divine] knowledge, and [Divine] approval, in these three verses:

هُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلَّذِينَ هُمْ لِرَبِّهِمْ يَرْهَبُونَ

"Those who feared their Lord, there was guidance and mercy for them [from their Lord]." (Qur'an, Chapter 7, Verse 154)

إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى ٱللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ ٱلْعُلَمَٰٓؤُا۟

"Only those servants [of God] fear Him who possess knowledge." (Qur'an, Chapter 35, Verse 28)

رَّضِىَ ٱللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا۟ عَنْهُ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ لِمَنْ خَشِىَ رَبَّهُۥ

"God is pleased with them and they are pleased with God. It is for the one who fears one's Lord." (Qur'an, Chapter 98, Verse 8)

The first verse has guidance and mercy, second has knowledge, and third has God's approval - all of them have been reserved for the people who fear God. [Divine] Knowledge is the outcome of fear [of God]. Prophet Moses (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said, "People of God-fear will have the companionship of the Supreme Companion (*Rafeeq al-'Aala*, i.e., God) and no one will participate in this [lofty spiritual] rank of theirs". They will obtain this companionship because God-fear is only practiced by people of [Divine] knowledge [as those who are devoid of it or are oblivious to it, who seemingly go about with their wrongdoings with impunity,] and people of knowledge being the heirs of the prophets, have the right to this companionship, and prophets will have the companionship of the Supreme Companion. Hence, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him), during this illness that led to his demise, was given the choice [by God] to stay in the world if he wanted or to return to God if he wanted and to that he said:

اسالکالرفیقالاعلی

"I ask You for the Supreme Companion (I ask You for Your eternal companionship)". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Aisha (May God be pleased with her)]

Fudhail ibn Ayadh (May God have mercy upon him) said, "A person who fears God, it leads one to all types of improvements [of the inner being]". Shibli (May God have mercy upon him) said, "Whenever I feared God, a new door of wisdom and objective

deterrent lesson ('*Ibrah*) opened up for me that I had [previously] never seen before". Prophet Moses (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said, "God will say on the Day of Judgment: 'Today there is no one whose accountability I will not do, however, people of scrupulousness (those who take themselves to task for all of their thoughts, feelings, words and deeds) are exempt from this. I feel ashamed to do their accountability and reckoning (*Muhasaba*). They have risen above accountability [as they already did that voluntarily on their own during their worldly lives]'". Fear of God is based on scrupulousness and pious awe, reverence, and fear of God.

Is Domination of Fear or Hope or Moderate Level of Both Superior?

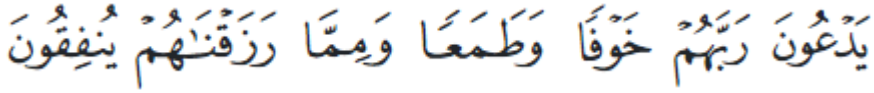
Hope [in God] and fear [of God] are two medicines that cure the hearts. These medicines in themselves do not have any praiseworthy qualities but to the extent they are beneficial in curing an illness, to that extent they will have excellence in them. Therefore, if heart has the disease of fearlessness [of God] and there is the danger that this person while considering oneself protected from God's punishment, stays indulged in worldly pleasures and delights, then in this case, fear [of God] is superior. If heart is dominated with disappointment and hopelessness, then hope [in God] would be superior. Similarly, if a servant [of God] is dominated with sins then fear [of God] would be superior.

It can also be said that fear is absolutely superior just like bread is superior to lemonade (known as "*Sikanjabeen*" that is a medicinal drink in traditional medicine made with lemon or vinegar and honey along with some other natural herbs) because bread cures the illness of hunger while *Sikanjabeen* cures bile substance from liver. The illness of hunger is dominant because bread is needed more [than the lemonade], hence, bread is superior. In this respect, we can say that fear [of God] is superior because of its dominant need because people are dominated by sins and self-delusions. If we cast a glance at the fountainheads of fear and hope, then we will be compelled to say that hope is superior because the fountainhead of hope is [Divine] mercy and fountainhead of fear is [Divine] wrath. One who deliberates on these [Divine] qualities that argue in favor of God's kindness and generosity, then they foster more love of God in the heart and there is no [spiritual] station higher than [the station of Divine] love. In the case of fear [of God], the servant's focus is on those Divine qualities that argue about His wrath and displeasure. Awe increases as a result of these [Divine] qualities and one does not attain as much Divine love and longing as it is attained by means of hope [in God].

Reformative Instead of Superior: In reality, fear and hope are neither needed in themselves nor are they the objective, but they are needed for something else. In my opinion, things that are needed for others, it is more correct to use the word "reformative" instead of "superior" for them. If this principle is accepted, we will then say that for most people, fear is more reformative than hope because most people are dominated with sins and they can only abandon sins by the whip of fear. Hope can make them audacious [in committing more acts of wrongdoings] while the people of

God-fear who have been purified in outer and inner beings, moderation and balance between fear and hope is reformative. That's why, this quote is very famous, "If a believer's fear and hope are weighed, they will come out as equal". Ali (May God be pleased with him) told one of his sons, "Have excessive fear of God and think that if you take all the good deeds of the world with you, they will not be accepted [by God], and have a lot of hope and think that even if you collect all the sins of the world, He will still forgive you". Umar (May God be pleased with him) said, "If it is announced that all the people will go to Hell except one person then I will have the hope to be that one person, and if an announcement is made that all people will go to Heaven except for one person then I will have that fear to be that one person". This is the highest degree of fear [of God] and hope [in God]. Only the hope and fear of Umar (May God be pleased with him) can be equal. If a sinning person hears this announcement that all people will go to Hell except one, he or she will suppose that the person exempted from going to Hell is him or her and can fell into self-delusion.

Those who are strong hearted and have perfection in their Gnosis (*Ma'rifa* or intimacy with the Divine), their fear and hope are equal, and they are not dominated only by hope. Umar (May God be pleased with him) was in such a [remarkable spiritual] state that he used to investigate his heart all the times and used to take great care in finding out the secret diseases of his heart to the extent that he used to ask Hudhaifa (May God be pleased with him), "Have you seen any signs of hypocrisy in me?" He asked him that because Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) confided in him the knowledge of the signs of hypocrisy. Who is there today who cleanses and purifies one's heart from hypocrisy and hidden polytheism (*Shirk* or attributing partners with God or attributing things to other than God that should have been exclusively ascribed to God)? If one has decided that one's heart has been purified [of all evils and wrongs] then to what extent can one be saved from God's reckoning? Is it possible that God has put the thought of [having inner] purification in one's heart [as a Divine retribution for one's own wrongdoings and sordid inner state,] but the reality is contrary to that? Even if someone, in fact, possesses the purification of the heart then how has one determined that one would stay like that until the very end of one's life? When this is the situation, how can one be fearless? That's why, it is necessary for a believer to have both fear and hope and there needs to be a balance and equality between the two. The domination of hope on laymen is a proof of their lack of understanding and knowledge. Hence, Qur'an has combined the two qualities where [sublime] qualities of servants [of God] have been mentioned:



"They beseech their Lord with hope and fear and spend [in charitable endeavors] from what We have provided [to them] as sustenance." (Qur'an, Chapter 32, Verse 16)

But where are people of high [spiritual] resolve like Umar (May God be pleased with him) who can keep equanimity between hope and fear? This is why in present times, fear is more appropriate for people on the condition that it does not make them reach despair, abandoning [righteous] actions, and getting immersed in hopelessness. Some people out of fear that they are sinners and there is no hope for their forgiveness,

abandon [righteous] deeds, and remain immersed in sins. Such a fear is harmful instead of being beneficial. Beneficial fear is the one that prompts one to [pious and righteous] deeds, causes revulsion to lusts, and does not allow one to incline towards the world (worldliness). It is not fear that a thought occurred to the heart and passed without having any impact on the organs causing hate against evil deeds, or persuading one to perform righteous deeds. Fear [of God] is also not what causes hopelessness. The summary of all the sayings [of sages and prophets] is that the combination of the two [qualities of hope and fear] is desirable. However, until the death comes, fear is more beneficial and suitable, and at the time of death, hope and good expectation of God's mercy is more suitable. It is because, fear is a whip that prompts a servant to [right] actions but one who is about to die and neither possesses the ability to perform [pious and righteous] actions anymore, or enduring the means of fear as fear would sink the heart [of the dying person,] and bring one closer to death, while hope strengthens the heart and imbues the love of God in every vein and fiber of one's being. The eternal happiness and everlasting success (*Sa'adah*) for a servant [of God, i.e., a human being] is in having the lamps of God's love illuminating the heart and in desiring meeting with God. A person who desires meeting with God, God wants to meet with such a one. The objective of love, longing, desiring meeting [with the Beloved], wishing for Divine vision, knowledge, and [righteous] actions is God's Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*) and fruit (outcome) of Gnosis is love. Every possessor of soul (human being) is bound to go back to Him after death and that's where one's final abode and destination is. One who meets with one's beloved, experiences the extent of happiness commensurate with one's love [for the beloved]. One who separates from one's beloved, experiences the extent of pain commensurate with one's love [for the beloved]. If someone's heart is dominated with the love of spouse, children, house, land, property, friends, relatives, it is such a person whose all of beloved things are in the world - world is one's paradise because paradise is the name of that specific place that combines all of one's favorite and beloved things. The death of such a person is like expulsion from the paradise as death becomes a veil between one and one's beloved things, and it is such a suffering that can only be endured with hardship. It is because the worldly people fear death and do not like to depart leaving behind this life.

Whereas, the person whose beloved is God and who only had attachments and longings for Divine remembrance, contemplation, and God's Gnosis and considers worldly impediments and links (attachments) as harmful for oneself, to such a one, world is a prison, here one does not find tranquility even for a moment and strives at all times to find deliverance from this prison and to meet with one's Beloved. You should now consider the feeling that a prisoner has at the time of getting liberated from the prison when one meets with one's beloved. This is the happiness that a believing servant finds first after getting liberated from the imprisonment of the body. This [happiness] is separate from the Divine recompense that God has set aside for His servants. What is this Divine recompense? It is something that no eyes have seen, no ears have heard and no thought of it has even occurred to any heart. God has prepared this Divine recompense for those people who prefer the life of the Hereafter over the life of the world, remain contented with it and find satisfaction with it. Similarly, the pain that is experienced by an unbeliever at the time of departing from the world, is

separate from the punishment that God has set aside for His disobedient servants. In it are variegated types of sufferings, chains, entrapments, and means of humiliation and contempt. We pray to God to grant us death [at the time of His choosing that is inevitable for each and every person on the face of the earth,] in a state of submission to His will and join us with the righteous. The hope of acceptance of this prayer is not there without obtaining God's love and God's love is not attained until the love of other than God, departs from the heart and the attachment of the heart to all impediments [of the Divine love] that are obstructing the attainment of Divine love, is severed such as wealth, fame, homeland, etc. Nevertheless, the domination of hope at the time of death is reformative because it engenders [Divine] love and the fire of lust is extinguished and removes the love of the world from the heart.

Fear of Gnostics about Inauspicious Ending

After listening to all the verses and traditions [about inauspicious ending of people], there can only be an imbecile or ignorant person who would be fearless. It is a great favor of God to keep the hearts of the Gnostics fresh with the soft breeze of hope. If that had not been the case, their hearts would have burned with fear.

Meaning of Bad or Inauspicious Ending: Bad ending has two degrees in which one is harder than the other. First degree that is harder is when one is in the throes of death and heart is dominated with it, one starts to have doubt about God or starts to reject God and dies in that state. This doubt and rejection is such a knot that creates a veil forever between one and God, and permanent veil [like this] leads one to remoteness from God and punishment [of the Hereafter]. Second degree of bad ending that is lower in degree than the first is that at the time of death, one's heart gets dominated with any matter from worldly matters or any lust from the worldly lusts that clouds out the heart and the mind to the extent that all senses get indulged in it. In that state, there will be no room left [in the heart and mind] for anything other than lusts. If the soul gets snatched (dies) in that state, one would have been focused on other than God due to the indulgence of one's heart [in worldly lusts and desires]. This is a form of veil between one and God. Veil [like this that symbolizes remoteness from God] invites [Divine] punishment because the fire that is lit by God is for the people of veil [of Divine remoteness]. A believer who has a sound heart [free of inner spiritual ailments], oblivious to the world (worldliness) [except for one's responsibilities in it], and is whole-heartedly focused on God, this fire says to such a one, "O believer! Pass over me [in peace]. Your illumination has extinguished my flames".

Causes for Bad Ending: Those causes that take one to bad ending are innumerable and cannot be encompassed but can be collectively alluded to as follows:

First Cause - Doubt and Refusal: It should be known with certitude that one who is deprived of simple faith in God, His prophets and His [revealed] books and indulges in debates and argumentations, faces that danger we have alluded to [of having an inauspicious ending]. The similitude of such a person is of someone whose ship has

capsized in the middle of a sea and is now beset with rebellious waves of the sea. These waves move one around everywhere. It rarely happens that one [in such a situation] reaches the shore safely as most people die (drown) in that situation. That's why, searching for the reality of Divine Being and Attributes is pure ignorance and is tantamount to pushing one in the sea of dangers. But those who exit out of the limitations of intellect and have access to the light of spiritual unveiling (illumination) that shines on the horizon of prophethood and Gnosis [successfully arrive at the shores of safety]. It is not possible for every layman to reach this perfection as very few people attain this level. Therefore, the path of debates and argumentation is filled with multitudes of dangers. Once those people are protected from these dangers who are simple and out of fear of the fire of hell, get busy with Divine obedience. They do not waste their time on unnecessity of debates.

Second form of the cause of [bad] ending due to doubt and refusal is that faith in reality is weak, and love of the world dominates the heart. To the extent of the weakness of faith, love of God will also be weak but to that extent, love of worldliness will be strong. This strength will be to the degree that there will be no capacity left in the heart for the love of God, rather, this love would adopt the status of a passing thought that is born for a few moments and ends. Its impact is not strong enough to oppose the lower self and deviate it from the Satanic path. The natural outcome of this situation is that a human being gets immersed in lusts from head to toe to the extent that one's heart hardens and darkens. Then this darkness and hardness [of the heart] increases proportionally to the sins to the extent that the lamp of faith, that was emanating a faint light, gets suddenly extinguished and one does not even get to feel that one does not have any light of faith left in the heart. [Consequently,] Darkness becomes one's nature, temperament, and purpose. In throes of death, this weakness in love of God increases even more because one realizes the impending separation from the world, that is one's beloved, dominating one's heart. This realization of [coming] separation makes one feel the pain and at that time, a thought is born in one's heart that the separation between one and the world will happen because of death and death is from God. Therefore, one considers death as bad and there is a danger here that one may start having enmity with God in one's passion for the love of the world. Its example is that of a man who has some love for his son but has great love for his wealth. In this situation, if the son wastes away his wealth, the little love he had for his son will turn into hate and he will start considering his son as his enemy. If one's soul is taken away at the moment when the feeling of hate or enmity towards God is rising in one's heart, it is obvious that one will have an inauspicious ending and will be ruined forever. It is proven from this detail that in this situation, one had a bad ending because one's heart was dominated with the love of the world, and one's inclination was towards the worldly means, and had weakness in one's faith because of which, the love of God was also weak. It is learned from this that if one finds the love of the world subjugated and love of God dominant in one's heart, even though the love of the world is present [to a lesser degree] in the heart, then one is far from this danger [of bad ending].

Second Cause - Sins: Now the second cause of bad ending will be mentioned. This cause is relatively lighter compared to dying in the state of doubt and rejection [of God],

and it does not warrant eternally living in Hell. There are two causes of this [type of] ending - one is abundance of sins while faith is strong, second is weakness of faith while sins are less. The details about the first [sub] cause, which is abundance of sins, is that one commits sins because one is dominated by lusts and because of longing and habit, lusts get firmly ingrained in the heart. Things that one had been accustomed to for the rest of one's life, they come to mind at that very moment. Therefore, if one is inclined towards [Divine] obedience, one stays attentive towards [Divine] obedience even at the time of death, remembers and mentions it. One who is inclined towards sins, they dominate the heart even at the time of death. It also happens that the soul is taken away in such a state when one's heart is dominated with some worldly lust or sin. In this manner, one becomes veiled from God and there is great danger of inauspicious ending in one's favor.

If one does not have fear [of God] in the heart, the reason is not that one has a lot of wrongdoings, instead the reason is that one's heart is not devoid of lusts and hankerings. Rather, one is subservient to the desires of the lower self (*Nafs*), misfortune is dominant over one [due to one's own negligence and wrongdoings] and it does not allow one to witness the heedlessness of the heart, closeness to [eventual] death does not wakes one up, abundance of sins does not cause a stir in one's inner being, viewing the state of fearful [servants of God] does not have any effect on the heart, and fear of bad ending does not prevent one from committing sins. It is strange that when we want to accumulate the worldly wealth, we cultivate, plant saplings, do business, navigate ships in the seas, gallop horses in the deserts, and endure the hardships and sufferings of travels [in order to attain our purpose of worldly profits]. Similarly, if we desire an intellectual rank, we seek knowledge, stay up all night to repeat and memorize [points of knowledge], make efforts and struggle to search for our sustenance, do not have confidence on God's promise of providing us with the sustenance, we do not sit in our homes waiting for sustenance, and do not merely pray, "O God! Give us sustenance!" However, when the question comes before us about the everlasting dominion [of the Hereafter] or a mention is made of the Paradise, we are content with merely saying this with the tongue, "O God! Forgive us, have mercy upon us!", even though the Noble Being, whom we have our trust on, openly proclaims:

وَأَن لَّيْسَ لِلْإِنسَٰنِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَىٰ

"And human being will only get what one has strived for." (Qur'an, Chapter 53, Verse 39)

وَلَا يَغُرَّنَّكُم بِٱللَّهِ ٱلْغَرُورُ

"Let it not be the case that the deceiver (Satan) puts you in a state of delusion about God." (Qur'an, Chapter 35, Verse 5)

[Unfortunately,] All these verses neither forewarn us nor take us out from the valleys of arrogance and [mere] wishes [due to our own obliviousness to them]. In reality, having hope for salvation without actions and having certitude that we have attained salvation after [doing the needed] actions, is a matter of great loss.

If one looks carefully and examine one's own inner being, one will learn that it is replete with various types of wild beasts and poisonous creatures like anger, lust, enmity, jealousy, arrogance, self-righteousness, etc. All these inner qualities (character traits and inner dispositions) are the beasts that attack one all the time in the state of negligence. However, human beings don't feel and realize the torture from bestiality of these inner beasts and harmful animals. When veils will be lifted [upon death], you will see how much damage these [inner] beasts have caused you. At that time, you will know why you were admonished to protect yourself from these inner beasts. If you want to control these [inner] beasts or kill these harmful animals, you will need to control them before death, and you will need to make arrangements for their eradication before your own demise from the world. If you do not do this then remember, they will consume you in the end.

Chapter 14 – Inculcating Humility of Absolute Neediness before God, Enduring Poverty, and Abstinence from Worldliness and Materialistic Obsessions

Greed and materialism are two epidemics of our age, both at the level of individuals and nations. These two inner ills of the soul, propel individuals and nations towards unending avarice, leading to emptiness of the soul, and conflicts and wars to unjustifiably snatch and seize what rightfully belongs to others, fostering mutual enmities and ensuing hatred and deprivations that doesn't allow inner peace and tranquility at individual level and amicability between nations and communities at collective level. Such greed promotes poverty and desperation in some while others revel in luxuries. The cure for these two debilitating individual and collective ills is the realization of our neediness before God, enduring poverty with grace and patient perseverance, and inculcating abstinence from worldliness and materialism.

Humility of absolute neediness before God, enduring poverty with patience perseverance for our own betterment, and abstaining from worldliness and materialistic obsessions, are great inner virtues and spiritual qualities that lead to generosity of the soul, in which one becomes a source of immense giving in every sense of the word, without desiring anything in return from anyone. Such obliviousness to what others have, leads to sincerity, truthfulness, generosity, fearlessness from poverty or want, trust and reliance in God, patient perseverance and honest strivings especially in poverty, inner and outer peace between peoples and nations and a host of other positive inner qualities. Ghazali has provided a masterful and insightful treatment of this key subject in the fourth book in the fourth volume or quarter of his *magnum opus* "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God" that is presented here in condensed form as follows [20]:

It should be known that world (worldliness) is inimical to God. Many people have been misguided after falling into its deceit and many people have stumbled after getting entrapped in its deception. Its friendship is the root of sins and evils, and opposition to it, is the origin of all good deeds and goodness. Here we will explain the excellence of staying away from worldliness and adopting abstinence from it because this is central to the inner constructive and resilience-imparting qualities (*Munjiyaat*) [that bring about a positive inner transformation at individual and collective levels]. There is no hope for deliverance [from the problems of this world and the next] until the heart is completely detached from the world (worldly attachments) and there are two forms of that: either

the world stays away from one which is called poverty or one voluntarily detaches oneself from worldliness which is called abstinence (*Zuhd*). Both of these forms have different degrees [in spirituality] in helping with the attainment of eternal happiness and everlasting triumph (*Sa'adah*), success [in the worldly life] and salvation [in the afterlife]. First, we will explain the reality of poverty [spiritual and material] and abstinence [from worldliness], their types, conditions and [Divine] injunctions. In first part, we will discuss poverty and in second part we will discuss abstinence.

Reality of Poverty or Absolute Neediness, both Material and Spiritual, before God and Inner States of the Spiritual Traveler

Poverty is the name of lack of things that are needed. Lack of things that are not needed is not called poverty. Similarly, if needed things are present and person in need has control over them then such a one will not be called poor. If you have understood this point then you will not doubt the fact that every existence that is other than God, is poor. It is because, it has the need to exist and the presence or existence of anything is absolutely dependent on God's grace and will. If something is in the realm of existence and it is not in need of any other existence for its own existence, then it is absolutely rich [or self-sufficient who is oblivious to everyone and everything] and there is only one such existence which is the Being of God. The Being of God is self-sufficient, His Being is not dependent on anyone or anything, everything other than Him is in need of this one Being for their own existence. God has pointed to this very reality in Qur'an:

وَٱللَّهُ ٱلْغَنِىُّ وَأَنتُمُ ٱلْفُقَرَآءُ ۚ

"And God is rich and self-sufficient (not in need of anyone or anything, who owns everything that exists without needing any of that) but you all are poor indigents [before Him and in need of Him for each and everything to the extent that your own very existence is dependent on Him]." (Qur'an, Chapter 47, Verse 38)

Our purpose here is not to delve into the absolute meaning of poverty or neediness before God, instead, our purpose is to explain specifically the poverty of wealth and material possessions, otherwise, come to think of it, a servant [of God] has uncountable needs, some of these needs are such that they get fulfilled with wealth and specifically explaining them is our objective here. Therefore, we say that a person who does not possess wealth or material possessions is poor with respect to the material that one does not have but is in need of it. Then if we deliberate on it, we find that human beings have five states in poverty:

First State: This is the best state [to be in]. Its upshot is that if one gets wealth, one feels bad about it and is perturbed by its presence, hesitates to accept it, considers it bad, and tries to safeguard oneself from its evil. This state is called abstinence [from worldliness] (*Zuhd*) and the person who has this state is called abstinent (*Zahid*).

Second State: Is that one does not have so much desire for wealth that one is pleased with getting it and one does not have so much aversion to it that one is pained for getting it. Instead, one has so much courage that if one gets it, one can leave it. A possessor of such a state is termed as being in agreement [with God's will].

Third State: Is that one prefers getting wealth over not getting it because heart has some inclination towards it but is it not so strong to cause one to strive for it. Instead, if one gets it without hardship and hard work, one is pleased with it but if one faces hardships in getting it, one stops indulgence in seeking it. One with such state is called contented because one is content with what's present with one and despite having inclination to get more [wealth], did not struggle to get what was not present.

Fourth State: Is that one does not seek wealth due to one's inability and weakness, otherwise the desire [to do so] is present in the heart and one acts on every strategy that could get one some wealth, even though this may cause hardships, or one is engaged in seeking wealth but does not get it even after making efforts. Possessor of this state is called greedy.

Fifth State: Is that one is in need of wealth, [and material possessions] out of necessity that one is deprived of. Just like someone who is hungry but does not have bread or one who does not have clothes. One who has this state is called compelled by need, whether one's desire in seeking is weak or strong. It rarely happens that one is in the state of being compelled with need and is not inclined towards the thing that one is compelled for.

These are the five states [of human beings in terms of poverty]. The highest of these states is abstinence (*Zuhd*) and if compulsion [by need] is combined with abstinence then it is an extremely high state [of spirituality in material possessions]. Then there is a state that is higher than all of these five states and that is the state where a servant deems the presence or lack of wealth and material possessions as equal. If one gets wealth, heart is neither happy nor pained by it, similarly, if one does not get wealth, heart is neither happy nor pained by it. If a person has this state where all the treasures of the world are collected and handed over to one then one is not harmed by it because one understands that all treasures [of the heavens and the earth] belong to God, even though, they are in one's custody (possession) - today one has them, tomorrow they will go to someone else, so there is no difference between the two [states of having or not having any material possessions]. Such a person is termed oblivious because one is oblivious to either having or not having wealth and material possessions. Oblivious and rich are two words with different meanings. [The word] Rich or self-sufficient is applicable to God and [to a much lesser extent] on the servants of God who possess a lot of wealth. These people are pleased with the abundance of wealth because they are needy of retaining this wealth with them. In that respect, they can be termed as poor. However, the person who is oblivious, neither cares that the wealth comes in one's possession nor does one care about this wealth going out of one's possession [to someone else]. It is because one neither feels the pain due to having the wealth so as to be in need of getting rid of it nor is one pleased with it so as to be compelled to keep

it and it is also not the case that one does not have wealth making one desirous of keeping it. It is not suitable to call this oblivious [to wealth] person as rich or self-sufficient because despite one's obliviousness, one is in need of a lot of things [like God's help to retain one's state of obliviousness to wealth].

Abstinent and Oblivious: Abstinence [from worldliness] is a tremendous [spiritual] degree, rather, it could be termed as the highest degree of the righteous and pious, while, the oblivious [who considers having wealth or not having it as equal] is among the intimates of God (Gnostics). In this respect, abstinence is harmful for the oblivious because [as the saying goes], "the righteous deeds of the pious are [equivalent to] sins for the intimates of God". The reason is that the aversion to world (worldliness) is found in abstinence and that is equal to indulging in it, just like the lover of the world is indulged in the world and indulgence in [anything that is] other than God is a veil between one and God. There is no remoteness between you and God so that this remoteness can be called a "veil", instead, He is closer to you than your own jugular vein. He is also not restricted in any place or location so that the heavens and the earth would become a veil between you and God. Instead, your engagements [and obsessions] that are related to other than God are the veils. Indulgence in one's lower self and lusts is also like indulgence in other than God, because you are always indulged in your self (*Nafs*) and lusts, hence, you are veiled from God. In summary, one who is indulged in the love of one's self (*Nafs*), has deviated from God, similarly, if one is busy with hating one's self then such person is also not focused on God. Its parable is of a gathering in which both the lover and the beloved are present where the rival walks in. If the heart of the lover gets focused on the rival of the beloved and starts to think bad about the rival, it will be said that in the state the lover is busy with resenting the rival, one is deprived of the pleasure of looking at the beloved. If the lover had been immersed in the love of the beloved, one would not have paid even a slightest bit of attention towards the rival, nor would one have paid any attention to rival's interruption or would have wasted anytime in expressing one's disliking [for the rival]. Therefore, just like looking at the non-beloved with love in the presence of the beloved or even paying any attention to the non-beloved, is tantamount to attributing partners (*Shirk*) in love and is a fault in the lover. Perfection [of love] is in not paying any attention to non-beloved in either liking or disliking. Just like two loves cannot simultaneously combine in the heart, similarly enmity and love cannot be combined simultaneously. One who is indulged in love of the world is treading the path of remoteness [to God] in one's state of negligence, and one who is oblivious to it (i.e., worldliness), is treading the path of closeness to God as it is hoped for such a one that one will attain the state of Divine Presence.

From these details, you would have known that there are a total of six degrees [of human beings in terms of poverty] in which the highest degree belongs to the one who is oblivious then abstinent then agreeing then contented then in the end, the greedy. As far as the compelled [person] is concerned, abstinence, agreeing to Divine will and contentment, all of them can be imagined and hence, the degree of the compelled person depends on that. The word poor is applicable to people of all five degrees. It is not right to term the oblivious person as poor in the material sense, however, it is right

to apply this term on such a person because oblivious has this deep understanding that in all matters in general and in having obliviousness towards materialism in particular, one is [absolutely] needy of God. Calling oblivious person poor is like calling someone a servant [of God] who has this understanding of one's servanthood before God, even though the word servant is applicable to all creations in general. It is more appropriate to apply the word poor on one, compared to all negligent and heedless individuals, who has the deep understanding of one's poverty and absolute neediness [for each and everything] before God and hence is more deserving of this name. Therefore, the word poor is common in both meanings [of lack of material possessions as well as absolute neediness to God].

Excellence of Poverty or Absolute Neediness, both Material and Spiritual, before God

Abdullah bin Umar (May God be pleased with him) narrated that Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) asked the companions about who among people is good and they replied, "That wealthy person who fulfills the right of God in one's wealth [by giving in charity] and in one's self [by making efforts in the Divine path]". The prophet said, "Such a person is good but whom I am asking about is not this person". Companions asked, "O Prophet of God! Then which person is better?" Prophet responded, "That poor who gives out from one's hard work". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Abu Mansur ad-Daylami*). In a famous tradition, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

يدخل فقراء امتي الجنة قبل اغنيائهم بخمس مائة عام

"The poor of my nation will enter the Heaven, five hundred years before the rich [as rich will be held back for Divine accountability of their wealth and how they spent it or not spent it]". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Tirmidhi* on the authority of Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him])

This tradition means that a poor who is abstinent, will enter Heaven five hundred years before rich having desire for wealth. According to a tradition, Archangel Gabriel visited Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) and conveyed this message from God, "O Muhammad! God sends his salutations to you and asks, 'Do you want Me to transform mountains into gold and they move with you wherever you live'". Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) bowed down his head and said:

يَا جِبْرَئِيلُ إِنَّ الدُّنْيَا دَارُ مَنْ لَا دَارَ لَهُ وَمَالُ مَنْ لَا مَالَ لَهُ وَلَهَا يَجْمَعُ مَنْ لَا عَقْلَ لَهُ

فَقَالَ يَا مُحَمَّدُ ثَبَّتَكَ اللّٰهُ بِالْقَوْلِ الثَّابِتِ

"O Gabriel! World is the home of one who does not have a home and is the wealth of one who does not have wealth and it is accumulated by one who does not have intellect". Gabriel said, "O Muhammad! God has made you steadfast on a firm word". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Tirmidhi* on the authority of Abu

Umama [May God be pleased with him]. It has also been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Musnad Ahmed*)

In one tradition, Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) passed by a man who was sleeping on the ground, during his travels. He woke him up and said, "O you who is asleep! Get up and remember God!" He replied, "What do you want from me? I have left the world for the people of the world!" Jesus replied, "In that case, O friend! Stay asleep". God revealed to Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him):

وَلَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ إِلَىٰ مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِۦٓ أَزْوَٰجًا مِّنْهُمْ زَهْرَةَ ٱلْحَيَوٰةِ ٱلدُّنْيَا لِنَفْتِنَهُمْ فِيهِ ۚ وَرِزْقُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَىٰ

"And do not lift your eyes to look at the things We have bestowed upon different groups [of people] to benefit from, as a test for them as they are just the glitter of the worldly life. And the sustenance from your Lord is far better and everlasting." (Qur'an, Chapter 20, Verse 131)

Excellence of Specific Types of Poor – Agreeing, Contended, and Truthful:
Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

طُوبَىٰ لِمَنْ هُدِيَ إِلَى الْإِسْلَامِ وَكَانَ عَيْشُهُ كَفَافًا وَقَنَعَ بِهِ

"Glad tidings are for the one who has been guided to the path of submission to the Divine will, whose economy is according to one's needs, and one is contented with that". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Tirmidhi* on the authority of Fadhala ibn 'Ubaid [May God be pleased with him])

يَا مَعْشَرَ الْفُقَرَاءِ أَعْطُوا اللَّهَ الرِّضَى مِنْ قُلُوبِكُمْ تَظْفَرُوا بِإِثْوَابِ فَقْرِكُمْ وَإِلَّا فَلَا

"O the group of poor! Be agreeing with God in your hearts so that you get the Divine recompense of poverty otherwise you will not get it". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Abu Mansur ad-Daylami* on the authority of Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him]).

God revealed a Divine revelation to Prophet Ishmael (Peace and blessings of God be upon him), "Search for me by the broken-hearted people". He asked, "Who are they?" God responded, "They are the poor who are truthful [in their abject neediness before God]".

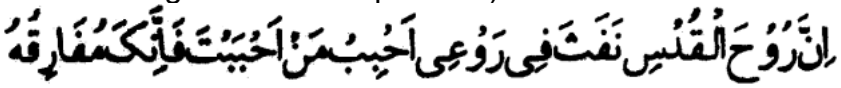
It is not hidden that the opposite of contentment is greed. Umar (May God be pleased with him) said, "Greed [actually] is poverty and having disappointment with people (not having any expectations from them) is wealthiness. One who has no expectations from people's wealth and properties and adopts contentment, remains oblivious (unattached) to them". Abu Mas'ud (May God be pleased with him) said, "Every day an angel calls out from underneath the [Divine] Throne, 'O son of Adam (Human being)! The little that you are contented with is better than a lot that makes you rebellious'". Abu Darda (May God be pleased with him) said, "There is no individual who does not have a fault in one's intellect. Therefore, when one's world (worldly possessions and wealth)

increases, one is extremely happy with that, even though, night and day are both busy in demolishing the palace of one's age (life) and one has no remorse for that. This unfortunate person does not know that if one's [remaining] lifetime decreases [as one progresses in age], what is the benefit of increasing the material possessions?" Some wise person was asked, "What is wealth?" to which that person responded, "[It is] Your [act of] decreasing your wishes and desires, and contentment with only the needed (bare necessities)".

Reality of What is Superior between Poverty and Richness: We have mentioned this principle in the discussion on patience, that something that is not the objective in its own right but is the objective for [attainment of] something else, its excellence and perfection can be judged from the objective's excellence and perfection. The way an objective is, would be the same way the means for attaining that objective would be. That's why, worldly wealth and possessions are discouraged because they prevent a servant [of God, i.e., a human being] from reaching God. Similarly, poverty is also not the objective in itself, but it is sought as it removes that impediment that prevents one from reaching God. However, there are many wealthy people, whose wealth did not cause them to get distanced from God like Prophet Solomon (Peace and blessings of God be upon him), [prophetic companions] Uthman bin Affan (May God be pleased with him) and Abdul Rahman bin 'Awf (May God be pleased with him). On the other hand, there are many poor whose poverty removed them from their real objective [of seeking God]. The real objective [of human being] in the world is that the servant [of God] loves God and has attachment with and longing for Him. This objective can only be attained when one attains the Gnosis (Divine proximity, intimacy, and knowledge) of God, and to step into the territory of Gnosis and to traverse it, is not possible in the presence of [worldly] engagements and entanglements. Just like wealth can be an impediment, poverty can also be an impediment [in traversing the path of closeness to God]. In reality, the real obstacle in attaining Gnosis and Divine intimacy is love of the world [and worldliness] which is impossible to combine with Divine love.

One who has the love for something in the heart, is immersed in it, whether one is immersed in its separation or in its presence. Then some people are more immersed in separation and some in the presence [of their beloved person or thing] as it all depends on the differences of their circumstances and inclinations. World is the beloved of the negligent [who are not alive to the real purpose of their existence]. Those who are separated from their beloved, are immersed in the contemplation of the attainment [of closeness with the beloved] and those who have attained the closeness of their beloved, are immersed in its protection and in enjoying the closeness to it to the maximum possible extent.

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:



"Holy Spirit (Archangel Gabriel) has put this in my heart: Love whoever [or whatever] you want, you will surely get separated from it".

It has been told in this prophetic narration that separation from the beloved is [always] a heart wrenching and extremely intense event (experience). That's why, you should love the one whom you will not have to get separated from and that beloved can only be God [and none other than God,] who will never ever separate from you, and do not love a thing that is bound to separate from you under all circumstances and that is the world. If you loved the world then you will not like meeting with God [in the Hereafter]. Similarly, your death will be on the state that you consider it as bad, and due to death, your connection with your beloved (world, worldly things, attachments, relationships, wealth, and possessions) will be [permanently] severed. Then the separation from the beloved is painful to the extent the heart has the attachment, longing, and love for it. One who has the world (worldly means and resources), is attached to it. It is obvious that compared to the person who does not even have the world (worldly means and resources) but is still greedy for seeking it, such a one will encounter more pain and anguish upon separation from the world. Our intent should have been clarified by now by this detailed explanation that poverty is superior and is more suitable for all the creations except for two occasions of exceptions: firstly, one's obliviousness [to worldliness] is such that the presence or absence of wealth are both equal to one; secondly, when in one's poverty, one seeks help from only the needed amount for the continuation of life. This is the discussion on what is superior between poverty and richness.

Etiquettes of Poor in the State of Poverty: The poor has some inner and some outer etiquettes and they are related to one's actions and meeting with people. It is necessary for every poor to adhere to these etiquettes.

Inner Etiquettes: Etiquette of the inner being is to not despise one's state [of poverty] that one has been afflicted with. In other words, one should not consider God's action [regarding one's state of poverty] as bad with respect to Him being the doer of it. One's lower self (*Nafs*) can consider poverty as bad but not because it is the act of God. Rather, one is at times grateful to God [for its good effects as described before]. This is the lowest degree [of etiquettes of the poor and poverty] and it is obligatory for the poor to act upon it, and is [Divinely] forbidden to act upon its opposite as that causes the wasting of the Divine recompense for poverty.

The degree higher than this is that one agrees with one's poverty [as this being the Will of God]. The degree even higher than that is that one is a seeker of poverty and is happy with it because one is familiar with the calamities and harms of wealth, has complete trust in God, has this certitude that one will surely get one's [Divinely ordained] sustenance, neither seeks more than one's needs nor does one like to have more than the needed amount. Ali (May God be pleased with him) said, "God both punishes and rewards by means of poverty. If granting Divine recompense (reward) is intended for someone, its indication is that one has good character traits, morals, manners and inner dispositions, one has obedience to God, does not complain about one's state [of poverty to others], instead one has gratitude to God for making one poor. If one is being punished by means of poverty, its indications are that one becomes bad natured and ill-tempered, abandons the obedience of one's Lord [and starts] to disobey Him,

complains about one's state, expresses one's displeasure and disliking of God's decision". It is proven from this that not every poor is good, instead, only that poor is praiseworthy who is not displeased with one's poverty, instead, one is happy and satisfied with its benefits. It is a famous saying that when a servant [of God] is granted something [in terms of material possessions or wealth], one is asked to accept it with three things: indulgence, worries and anxieties, and extended accountability [to God on the Day of Judgment].

Outer Etiquettes: Outer etiquettes that a poor person needs to adhere to, includes not extending one's needy hand in front of anyone, keep one's outer appearance as good so that the people would not consider one as needy, neither complain about one's state to anyone nor display one's poverty, rather, keep it confidential as much as possible and also hide that one is keeping one's poverty confidential. Etiquette in actions is that a poor should not express humility in front of rich because of their wealth, rather, one should stay dignified in front of them. At the minimum, a poor should not sit with the rich nor desire them to be seated next to one as these are the very things that engender greed and avarice.

Explanation of Abstinence from Worldliness

Reality of Abstinence: Let it be known that abstinence (*Zuhd*) [from materialism and worldliness] is an important [spiritual] station from among the stations of spiritual travelers and seekers of God. This station, like other stations, consists of knowledge, [inner] state [of being], and actions. State refers to that condition that is called abstinence and its meaning is that one does not have inclination left for anything [worldly or materialistic,] and it (inclination) develops for something [else] that is better than it. With respect to the thing that one has ended inclination towards is called abstinence, and with respect to the thing one now desires and has inclination towards, that state is termed as love. It means that abstinence needs two things - one thing that needs to be deviated from, and second thing that needs to be inclined towards. It is also necessary that the thing one inclines towards is capable of being inclined towards such as gold and silver and not something like stones and bricks. It is also necessary that the second thing is better than the first so that the inclination towards it can be dominant. One who sells the world for the Hereafter is abstinent from the world, and one who sells the Hereafter for the world is abstinent from the Hereafter. However, it is customary to use the word abstinent only with the person who is abstinent from the world. When it is proven that abstinence is to leave the beloved thing then it is automatically proven that the one who leaves [the beloved thing], achieves something even greater than it, otherwise, how is it possible to abandon something beloved without achieving something even more beloved?

Different Degrees of Abstinent: One who is separated from everything besides God to the extent that one does not even have the greed for Paradise, is the one who only loves God. Such a person will be termed "absolute abstinent" (*Zahid Mutlaq*). A person

who stays away from every worldly pleasure but has inclination towards the pleasures of the Hereafter such as heavenly spouses, lands, streams, fruits, etc., such a person is also abstinent but has a lesser degree than the first. One who abandons some pleasures of the world and does not abandon some others, for example, one does not have greed for wealth but has greed for fame, does not eat a lot but beautifies oneself more, such a person does not deserve to be called "absolute abstinent". The degree of such a one among abstinent is like the degree of a person among repentant who repents from some sins but not from others. This [type of] abstinence is also valid just like repenting from some sins is valid because repentance means abandoning forbidden things [according to the Divine law] and abstinence means abandoning permissible things that provide comfort and pleasure to the lower self. Just like it is not beyond comprehension that one leaves some forbidden things, similarly, it is also not against the intellect that one abandons some permissible things [and not others]. However, one who just settles on [abandoning] forbidden things will not be called abstinent because this word is specifically related to [abandoning] permissible things. [Hence,] It is learned from this that terminologically, abstinence means removing one's inclination (desire) from the world and directing it towards the Hereafter or severing one's relationship with other than God to establishing relationship with God [alone]. This is a very high degree.

We have written it before that the thing desired should be better than the thing abandoned by the abstinent person. Similarly, it is also necessary that the thing one abandons, one has control (power, capability or jurisdiction) over it because something one has no control over, there is no meaning of abandoning it and the decline of desire only happens when one abandons a thing. Hence, when someone addressed Ibn al-Mubarak (May God have mercy upon him) by calling him abstinent, he responded, "Abstinent is Umar bin AbdulAziz (a righteous caliph who was known for his piety and abstinence despite having immense political power and authority over a vast empire) to whom the world came in front of with hands folded [in subservience], but he did not even turn his face towards it. What abstinence I have done?"

Meaning of Knowledge: [As discussed before, abstinence consists of knowledge, inner state, and actions.] Knowledge that is the cause of [inner spiritual] state and state that is the fruit of it, is that the abstinent person is aware of the reality that the thing being abandoned is insignificant compared to the thing that is being desired. One who knows that what is with God is everlasting and that the Hereafter is better and enduring, in other words, its pleasures are good in their own right and are everlasting, just like precious jewels are good and more durable than beautiful pieces of ice and the owner of the pieces of ice has no difficulty in selling them for jewels, meaning that if the owner of ice is offered to give away pieces of ice in exchange for jewels, one will happily agree to that. This is the parable of the world and the Hereafter. World is like the ice that is placed in the sun (sunlight) and is gradually melting away and is close to complete extinction, and Hereafter is like that jewel that has no extinction. To the extent one has this certitude of this difference between the world and the Hereafter, to that extent one has the desire for the enduring and the everlasting (Hereafter). Only this much knowledge is needed about abstinence, in other words, it is enough to know that the Hereafter is better and everlasting. Sometimes, even those people are aware of this

reality who due to the weakness of their knowledge and certitude or due to the domination of lusts or due to the subjugation by Satan or due to getting deceived by his false promises, are not capable of abandoning worldliness until death snatches them [from this world and from the life therein]. Then no path is left for them except to have remorse and to mourn what they have lost [in terms of opportunities they did not avail during their lifetime to attain the real purpose of their lives and consequent eternal happiness and everlasting triumph].

Meaning of Action: Now that action will be explained that is performed in the state of abstinence. The crux of this action is to leave behind one thing and to adopt another thing which is better than the thing left behind. Abstinence demands that the thing one is abstaining from is completely abandoned, and the thing one should be abstinent in is the world including all of its means and indications. Abstinent person should take the love of the world (worldliness) out of one's heart and in place of it, enter the love of Divine obedience in it. Then the thing one removes from the heart, the same thing should be removed from the eyes, hands, and all remaining [bodily] organs and use these organs for persistence and perseverance in Divine obedience. It is not enough to merely remove the love of the world [from the heart], instead, Divine obedience is also necessary.

Excellence of Abstinence

God has praised abstinence at various occasions and has persuaded His servants (human beings) to adopt it. He said:

وَقَالَ ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُواْ ٱلۡعِلۡمَ وَيۡلَكُمۡ ثَوَابُ ٱللَّهِ خَيۡرٞ لِّمَنۡ ءَامَنَ

"And those people who have been endowed with perception and understanding started to say, 'Woe be unto you! The recompense from God is far better [than running after wealth and material possessions] for the one who has faith [in God].'" (Qur'an, Chapter 28, Verse 80)

In this verse, abstinence has been ascribed to the scholars (people of true learning and deep understanding) and abstinent has been attributed with the quality (attribute and inner trait) of knowledge. This is a high praise. At another place, He said:

أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ يُؤۡتَوۡنَ أَجۡرَهُم مَّرَّتَيۡنِ بِمَا صَبَرُواْ

"These people will have double the reward [and recompense from God] because of their patience." (Qur'an, Chapter 28, Verse 54)

Scholars of Qur'anic exegesis have explained that this refers to people who exercised patience over their abstinence [and hence, became deserving of double the reward]. In one place He said:

إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا مَا عَلَى ٱلْأَرْضِ زِينَةً لَّهَا لِنَبْلُوَهُمْ أَيُّهُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا

"We have made the things on earth a cause of its embellishment and bedizenment in order to test the people [of the world] to see who acts good in it." (Qur'an, Chapter 18, Verse 7)

Some scholars of Qur'anic exegesis have interpreted it as referring to the one who does more abstinence in the world then termed the abstinence of such a one as "good action". On another occasion, He said:

وَلَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ إِلَىٰ مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِۦٓ أَزْوَٰجًا مِّنْهُمْ زَهْرَةَ ٱلْحَيَوٰةِ ٱلدُّنْيَا لِنَفْتِنَهُمْ فِيهِ ۚ وَرِزْقُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَىٰ

"And do not lift your eyes to look at the things We have bestowed upon different groups [of people] to benefit from, as a test for them as they are just the glitter of the worldly life. And the sustenance from your Lord is far better and enduring (everlasting)." (Qur'an, Chapter 20, Verse 131)

ٱلَّذِينَ يَسْتَحِبُّونَ ٱلْحَيَوٰةَ ٱلدُّنْيَا عَلَى ٱلْءَاخِرَةِ

"Those are the ones who prefer the life of the world over the Hereafter." (Qur'an, Chapter 14, Verse 3)

In this verse, the character trait of unbelievers has been mentioned. It is known from this that believer is the one whose character trait (quality) is opposite to that, in order words, compared to the world, one loves the Hereafter. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

وَمَنْ أَصْبَحَ وَهَمُّهُ الدُّنْيَا شَتَّتَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ أَمْرَهُ وَفَرَّقَ عَلَيْهِ ضَيْعَتَهُ وَجَعَلَ فُقْرَهُ بَيْنَ عَيْنَيْهِ وَلَمْ يَأْتِهِ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَا كُتِبَ لَهُ وَمَنْ أَصْبَحَ وَهَمُّهُ الْآخِرَةُ جَمَعَ اللّٰهُ لَهُ هَمَّهُ وَحَفِظَ عَلَيْهِ ضَيْعَتَهُ وَجَعَلَ غِنَاهُ فِي قَلْبِهِ وَأَتَتْهُ الدُّنْيَا وَهِيَ رَاغِمَةٌ

"One who wakes up in the morning and gets immersed in the worries [and obsessions] of the world, God scatters [worldly] matters of such a one [so that one is no longer able to hold everything together, and gets submerged in worries and anxieties about them], and one's economic matters become difficult and [they] bring out one's neediness and poverty in front of one, and one only gets that much from the world that has been [Divinely] destined for one. And one who wakes up in the state of immersion in the contemplation of the Hereafter, God collects together the courage of that person (inspires one with courage and determination) and protects one's economy (economic matters) and puts richness (confidence and sufficiency) in one's heart, and the world comes to such a one humiliated". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Ibn Majah* on the authority of Zaid bin Thabit [May God be pleased with him])

إِذَا رَأَيْتُمُ الْعَبْدَ وَقَدْ أُعْطِيَ صَمْتًا وَزُهْدًا فِي الدُّنْيَا فَاقْتَرِبُوا مِنْهُ فَإِنَّهُ يُلَقَّى الْحِكْمَةَ

"When you see a servant [of God] who has been imparted with silence (who stays quiet and does not blabber or talk much) and has been endowed with abstinence in the world then get close to such a one because such a person is being [Divinely] taught [and instructed] with wisdom". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Ibn Majah* on the authority of Ibn Khallad [May God be pleased with him])

God, the Exalted, has said:

وَمَن يُؤْتَ ٱلْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِىَ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا

"One who has been endowed with [Divine] wisdom, such a one has received tremendous goodness." (Qur'an, Chapter 2, Verse 269)

Hence, there is a famous saying that a person who practices abstinence in the world for forty years, God emanates from one's heart fountains of wisdom and the same words of wisdom appear from one's tongue. Some prophetic companions narrate that they asked Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him): "O Messenger of God! Which person is better?" He replied:

كُلُّ مُؤْمِنٍ مَخْمُومُ الْقَلْبِ صَدُوقُ اللِّسَانِ

"Every believer who is purified and cleansed of the heart (one with a purified heart who does not harbor hatred, animosity, jealousy and resentment against anyone) and truthful of the tongue (only speaks the truth)".

We asked: "O Messenger of God! Who is being referred to by 'purified of the heart'?" He replied: "That pious, clean-hearted human being who does not have any dishonesty, treachery, deception, falsehood, artificiality, rebelliousness and jealousy". We asked: "Who is an even better person than that?" He replied:

اَلَّذِي يَشْنَأُ الدُّنْيَا وَيُحِبُّ الْآخِرَةَ

"One who dislikes worldliness and loves the Hereafter [as such a one is truly abstinent]." (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Ibn Majah* on the authority of Sahl ibn Sa'ad [May God be pleased with him])

In another tradition, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

إِنْ أَرَدْتَ أَنْ يُحِبَّكَ اللَّهُ فَازْهَدْ فِي الدُّنْيَا

"If you want God to love you then you should be abstinent [from the world while living] in the world." (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Ibn Majah* on the authority of Sahl ibn Sa'ad [May God be pleased with him])

In this prophetic narration, abstinence has been declared as the cause of [attaining] God's love and the reality is that for the lovers of God [and for those whom God loves], there are high [spiritual] ranks because abstinence is a station from among the highest [spiritual] stations [in the path to God]. In another tradition, he said:

مَنْ آثَرَ الدُّنْيَا عَلَى الْآخِرَةِ ابْتَلَاهُ اللّٰهُ بِثَلَاثٍ هَمًّا لَا يُفَارِقُ قَلْبَهُ أَبَدًا وَفَقْرًا لَا يَسْتَغْنِي أَبَدًا وَحِرْصًا لَا يَشْبَعُ أَبَدًا

"One who prefers the world over the Hereafter, God inflicts that person with three things: such sorrow that never separates from the heart, such poverty that never changes into richness, and such avarice that never gets satiated". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Tabarani* on the authority of Abdullah ibn Mas'ud [May God be pleased with him])

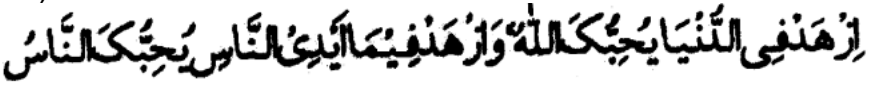
In another tradition, he said, "A servant's faith is not complete until anonymity becomes more beloved to one than fame, and paucity of things become more beloved than the abundance of things". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Musnad al-Firdous* on the authority of Ali ibn Talha [May God be pleased with him]) Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said, "God granted me with the choice that if I wanted, the [entire] valley of Bet-ha in Mecca would be transformed into gold. I entreated to God, 'O God! I wish to stay hungry one day and on another day, eat to my fill. The day I stay hungry, I will weep and plead before You, and on the day, I eat to my fill, I will thank and praise You'". Abdullah bin Abbas (May God be pleased with him) narrated, one day Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) was going somewhere and Archangel Gabriel was with him. When he arrived at Mount Safa [near *Ka'ba* in Mecca] he said, "O Gabriel! I swear by the Being who has sent you with truth, the family of Muhammad has started their evening in such a state that they do not even have a handful of barley or wheat flour [to make bread with]". He barely said that when a loud thunder was heard from beyond the sky that made him afraid. He asked Gabriel, "What is this sound? Has God commanded the advent of the Day of Judgment?" Gabriel responded, "No, it is *Israfil* (the angel who will blow the trumpet to signal the Day of Judgment) who upon hearing your words have come down". *Israfil* came to the prophet and said, "What you said, God has heard and He has sent me to You with the keys of the earth [to bestow upon you all the treasuries of the earth] and commanded me to tell you that if you want, I will transform the mountains of *Tihamah* (refers to the Red Sea coastal plain of the Arabian Peninsula) into emerald, beryl, gold and silver that will go wherever you go. And if you want, you can become a prophet king (like Prophets David and Solomon [Peace and blessings of God be upon them]) or if you want, you can remain as the prophet slave [of God]". Gabriel gestured to the prophet to [continue to] have humility for the sake of God. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said this thrice [by way of emphasis], "I would like to remain as the prophet and slave of God (the greatest status and honor before God is of the slave of God which is the state of highest level of closeness and intimacy with God)".

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) has further said this:

إِذَا أَرَادَ اللّٰهُ بِعَبْدٍ خَيْرًا زَهَّدَهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَرَغَّبَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ وَبَصَّرَهُ بِعُيُوبِ نَفْسِهِ

"When God intends good for someone, He makes one abstinent in the world and inclines towards the Hereafter, and informs one about the faults of one's lower self

(faults, shortcomings, wrongs and evils of the inner being)". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Musnad al-Firdous*)



"Have abstinence in the world, God will love you and have abstinence from what people have, people will love you (i.e., detachment of the heart from the world leads to the attainment of Divine love, and detachment of the heart from what people have and not having any expectations from them, causes them to love you)".

Details of Abstinence in the Necessities of Life: It should be known that the things people are indulged in are of two types. Some of them are useless and some are superstitious [besides others being necessary or important]. Important things include food and drink. As far as useless are concerned, we cannot provide their details as they are innumerable, however, necessary things can be counted easily. In the amount, types and timings of necessary things, inclusion of uselessness is possible. Hence, the method of abstinence is being explained here. Things that are needed in life are six: food, clothing, housing, means of family life, family, and wealth.

First Necessity - Food: First necessity is food. One needs only that much food that can retain one's bodily strength and energy. Abstinence requires that one reduces its length and breadth. Length is with respect to one's age. It has been generally observed that a person who has food for a day is not contented with it, instead, one is greedy for more. Breadth is related to the quantity of food, type, and timing. The length of [duration for hoarding] food can be reduced by reducing one's hope for long life. The least degree of abstinence in food is to be contented with the necessary amount to mitigate hunger when it is felt and that there is danger of getting sick. One who is in this state, will not retain anything for night from the food one had during the day. This is a very high degree [of abstinence in food]. Second degree is that one accumulates food for one month or forty days. Third degree is to accumulate food for up to a year and this is the state of the weakest type of abstinent people. One who stores for even more than a year, cannot be considered abstinent in any degree. It is because one expects to live for more than a year, which is having hopes for a long life [which is one of the spiritual ailments that prompts people to hoard, steal, embezzle and collect, often at the expense of others] and a possessor of long hopes cannot be abstinent. However, if one does not have a regular source of income and one is not inclined to accept money from people then there is no harm in storing wealth for more than a year. However, those people do not consider it right, who put the condition of trust in God, in [observing] abstinence.

Second Necessity - Clothing: The second human need is clothing and the lowest degree in clothing is to have a dress that protects one from cold and heat and covers the body. Some sages have said, "Clothing should be such that it is worn by common folk (simple clothes) and do not wear clothes that will make you famous or people look at you". Abu Suleiman al-Darani (May God have mercy upon him) said, "Clothes are of three types: one that is solely for the sake of God - it is the dress that covers the body legally [as prescribed by the Divine law]; second is that dress that is worn for its softness; and third is the dress whose objective is outer beauty and embellishment".

One Gnostic said, “One whose clothes are thin, his or her path to God is also thin (one is devoid of religiosity and spirituality due to wearing sheer clothes)”.

Third Necessity - Housing: It can be said as a summary that one who seeks [housing] for a need, should not exceed the bounds of need. All the things in the world that are within the bounds of need, are tools of the path to God (*Deen*) and are means to it, and things that exceed the needs are in opposition to the path to God. Keeping this principle in front, the purpose of housing is that one stays protected from heat, cold and rain, stays away from the eyes of the people [for privacy reasons], and remains protected from their harm. To the extent a house is needed for the fulfilment of this objective is known, what’s more than that is useless, and all useless things are in the injunction of worldliness, and one who is a seeker of useless things or striving for them, is far removed from abstinence.

Fourth Necessity – Household Goods: There are many degrees of abstinence in this. Highest degree is the state of Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) that he only had a comb and a bowl [as his total possession]. Once upon seeing a man combing his beard with his fingers, he threw away his comb. Second time he saw him, he was drinking water from a stream with his bare hands [making a cup out of them]. Jesus threw away the bowl as he thought it was no longer needed. Such is the state of all goods related to household needs. Everything is needed for an objective that is being sought. If there is no purpose associated with a thing and one’s needs can be fulfilled without it then it is a source of hardship for one in both the world and the Hereafter. The thing that is absolutely needed, one should be contented with the low degree of it which is to see if it is sufficient for the objective or not. A high degree in that is to have a separate tool for every work, but the tool is of ordinary quality. If there are multiple tools for the same thing or they are of high quality, then one will be excluded from all categories of abstinence and will be considered to be involved in useless things.

Fifth Necessity – Family and Marriage: Truth is that in some circumstances, not getting married is superior as explained in the “Book of Marriage” in [the second volume about social dealings in Ghazali’s *magnum opus* “*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*” or “Revival of Knowledge of Path to God” that has been skipped for the present work]. In this case not getting marriage is abstinence. But when the desire dominates, and it cannot be mitigated without marriage then marriage is obligatory. In this case, not getting married is not abstinence. However, in case there is nothing wrong with not getting married, and no calamity befalls on one due to marriage, but one does not get married because heart will be inclined towards the spouse, one will have attachment [of the heart] to the spouse and heart will become negligent of God’s remembrance, in this situation, not getting married is abstinence. If one has this certitude that spouse will not make one negligent of God’s remembrance but still does not get married to avoid companionship and copulation, then this is certainly not abstinence. It is because offspring are not only the objective for the continuation of human race and for increase in the prophetic followers, it’s an act of worship and the pleasure one gets in copulation is not harmful, provided that pleasure is not the sole objective [as its other objectives include staying away from sins, guarding one’s chastity, modesty and spirituality, finding strength for

Divine worship, lowering the gaze from looking at sinful things, and treading the path to God by serving the family]. It's like one who stops eating and drinking as there is pleasure in eating and drinking. It is obvious that this is not abstinence because it wastes (harms) the human body, just like not getting married wastes the human race [as human race will come to an end if people stop marrying]. Therefore, it is not permissible to not get married to avoid the pleasure of copulation. Junaid (May God have mercy upon him) said, "I like, in case of a beginner spiritual traveler, to not put one's heart in three things otherwise one's state will change: one in an occupation; second in seeking prophetic narrations [as this knowledge has historically been a source of prestige and fame]; third in marriage".

Sixth Necessity – Wealth and Fame: Both of these things are a means of fulfilling all previously mentioned five needs. Fame means capturing the hearts of people, in other words, making a place for oneself in the hearts of people so that they can assist in one's actions and objectives. Fame or the need to make room in the hearts of people is either for deriving benefits or for removing harms or for getting rid of someone's oppression. As far as deriving benefits is concerned, if one has wealth, one does not need fame for that purpose because one can pay to get services of people for fulfilling all of one's needs, whether they have respect for one or not, they will provide service to earn money. Regarding the issue of repelling harms, in other words, be needy for protecting oneself from expected losses, is needed in a country where there is no adherence to justice, or one is surrounded with neighbors who are oppressive to one. One seeking fame is a traveler on the path of destruction. It is the way of the abstinent to not make efforts for making room in the hearts of people. One's continuous indulgence in worship and treading the path to God (*Deen*) will itself draw people's attention and will create honor and prestige in their hearts, and one will be protected from people's harms and oppression, and people of all religions will have the sentiments of love and respect for one.

The upshot of this is that needing an amount of wealth and fame is not forbidden but instead, more than needed amounts of wealth and fame are fatal poisons. The benefit of these two things is only when they don't exceed the bounds of need. One who keeps one's path to God (*Deen*) pure and avoids doubtful things, acts upon the psychology of the self and keeps it restricted within the bounds of needs, is in the path of caution and prudence and is certainly included in the group destined for salvation.

Chapter 15 – Realizing the Unity, Omnipotence and Absolute Power of God Over Every Matter Confronted by Human Beings and Developing Trust in God

Knowing that God is All-Powerful, All-Mighty, All-Present, All-Knowing, All-Seeing, All-Hearing, All-Loving, All-Kind, All-Merciful, All-Caring, All-Encompassing and at the same time fully capable of exacting befitting retribution and justice on behalf of the oppressed, weakened, humbled and wronged. It gives us immense confidence and self-belief that we are ultimately in good hands, in Divine protection and encompassment, irrespective of the apparent situation we are in, even though it may seem desperate, hopeless and discouraging, and in the end, everything will be fine and things will work out for the best due to Divine mercy, providence and largesse. This self-belief and confidence are further reinforced by the realization that apparent power of the wrong doers and oppressors is merely a leash that God has extended to test how they behave and, in the end, they will be taken to task for their actions. Those who suffer through their hands will be honored and empowered by God, if not in this life, then immediately in the life that begins after this life where God's control and power, previously non-obvious to many in worldly life due to their spiritual blindness, is clearly seen by all who were previously emboldened to commit wrongs and excesses on God's creations, with apparent impunity due to this inner blindness.

Belief and certitude in this Divine unity and power brings about humility, that is a mellowing quality in dealing with fellow humans, besides playing a crucial role in eradicating arrogance that vitiates relations between people and nations. It, in turn, fosters mutual respect, recognition of mutual rights and responsibilities and an impetus to work in peace and harmony for the common good. At individual level, it pulls one out of despair, depression, sorrow, low morale, and imbues one with positive outlook on life and fortitude to carry on to one's best abilities despite obstacles and challenges. It also shows one's own limits and puts one's reliance and trust in God for the final outcome of all matters that one strives to achieve in one's own life and in the society at-large. Trust in God stiffens resolve in the face of adversities, with fortitude and prevents sorrows and frustrations when things do not go the way we want, as the final end of all affairs rests with God alone as the final authority and disposer of all affairs. Ghazali's masterful and insightful treatment of this key subject in the fifth book in the fourth volume or quarter of his *magnum opus* "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God" is being presented in condensed form as follows [21]:

Let it be known that trust in God (*Tawakkul*) is a destination (*Manzil*) from among the destinations in the path to God (*Deen*) and is a [spiritual] station (*Maqam*) from among the stations of the people of certitude [in God]. Rather, it is a high degree from the high degrees of people of Divine Gnosis (*Ma'rifa* or intimacy and proximity with God). Trust in God is deep and wide ranging in terms of knowledge and is extremely difficult in terms of action. In terms of its comprehension, putting emphasis on material means and having confidence in them, is tantamount to attributing partners with God (*Shirk*) in Divine unity and oneness (*Tawheed*). Being completely negligent of it is tantamount to criticizing the prophetic way and the Divine law. It is incomprehensible that one has confidence on the means as well as disregarding them [at the same time] (trust in God goes hand in hand with employing all possible material means and planning for it, but having confidence and reliance in God for their fruition).

Understanding the meaning of trust in God so that it is both in accordance with the requirements of Divine oneness and [simultaneously] not against the intellect and the Divine law, is very difficult and subtle. It is because of its subtlety and hiddenness, only those people can be informed of its reality who have been endowed with knowledge and whose eyes have the light of truth. Others do not have the capability to perceive the realities of these matters. Realities are revealed to true scholars [who have the mystic spiritual insight] and they explain them to other servants of God. In this chapter, we will first explain the excellences of trust in God as an introduction, and then we will explain the Divine unity [and its implications for inculcating trust in God].

Excellence of Trust in God

God says:

وَعَلَى ٱللَّهِ فَتَوَكَّلُوٓاْ إِن كُنتُم مُّؤۡمِنِينَ

"And have trust in God if you are believers." (Qur'an, Chapter 5, Verse 23)

وَمَن يَتَوَكَّلۡ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسۡبُهُۥٓ

"One who will have trust in God, God will suffice such a one [in all of one's matters]." (Qur'an, Chapter 65, Verse 3)

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يُحِبُّ ٱلۡمُتَوَكِّلِينَ

"Verily, God loves those who have trust in Him." (Qur'an, Chapter 3, Verse 159)

What could be said about the greatness of the [spiritual] station that whoever attains, attains the love of God and God becomes one's caretaker! For the one whom God is sufficient, whom God loves and protects, is a highly successful person because such a beloved [of God] will not receive [Divine] punishment or will not be distanced and veiled from God. One who seeks sufficiency from other than God, is one who has abandoned trust in God. In another place, God says:

وَمَن يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ فَإِنَّ ٱللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

"And the one who has trust in God then no doubt God is overpowering and wise." (Qur'an, Chapter 8, Verse 49)

In other words, He is so overpowering that one who comes into His protection, He does not allow such a one to be humiliated, one who pleads in His court, He does not reject one's plea, and one who has confidence in His strategy, is not disappointed with it. Other than God, everything is subjugated [to the Divine will]. All servants are dependent on Him and are needy before Him, just like you are. That's why, how can they be relied on? In one verse it says:

إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ ٱللَّهِ لَا يَمْلِكُونَ لَكُمْ رِزْقًا فَٱبْتَغُوا۟ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرِّزْقَ وَٱعْبُدُوهُ

"The ones you have been worshipping other than God, do not have any power to provide you with any sustenance. So, seek your sustenance from Him and worship Him alone." (Qur'an, Chapter 29, Verse 17)

وَلِلَّهِ خَزَآئِنُ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ وَلَٰكِنَّ ٱلْمُنَٰفِقِينَ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ

"And to God belongs all the treasures of the heavens and the earth but the hypocrites do not know." (Qur'an, Chapter 63, Verse 7)

In the explanation in Qur'an about Divine oneness, it has been cautioned that other than God should not be relied on and only the One and the Irresistible One [who subdues each and everything] (God) should be relied on and trusted. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

"One who belongs to God, God protects such a one from all pain and hardships, and provides one with sustenance from a place that one could not even have imagined; and one who gets belonged to the world, God hands such a one over to the world [that keeps one perturbed, worried, anxious, perplexed, depressed and restless until one dies]". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Tabarani Sagheer* on the authority of Imran ibn al-Husayn [May God be pleased with him])

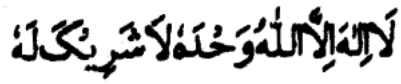
"One who wants to be the richest of all should trust in God more than what's in front of one". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Hakim* and *al-Bayhaqi* on the authority of Abdullah ibn Abbas [May God be pleased with him])

God sent a revelation to Prophet David (Peace and blessings of God be upon him), "The servant [of Mine] who holds My rope instead of the creations, I grant such a one deliverance from the deceptions of the heaven and the earth". Ibrahim bin Adham (May God have mercy upon him) said, "I asked a [Christian] monk, 'Where do you eat from?' He replied, 'This is not my headache, ask my Lord where He feeds me from!'" One

Gnostic said, “When I made God my caretaker (*Wakeel*), I found the path to every good”.

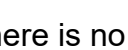
Reality of the Origin of Trust in God which is Divine Oneness: It should be known that trust in God is among the doors of faith that are composed of knowledge, [inner spiritual] state, and action. Similarly, trust in God is attained from these very three things: knowledge which is the origin, action which is the fruit (outcome), and state that is the objective of trust in God.

Knowledge: Knowledge is the original thing and it is what’s terminologically called faith (*Iman*) because faith means ascertainment and every ascertainment of the heart is called knowledge, and if this knowledge becomes strong, it is called certitude (*Yaqeen*). There are many types of certitude but here, we will only discuss the type that trust in God is dependent on and that type is called Divine unity and oneness (*Tawheed*) which is what’s meant by the statement:



“The is no god but God, He is One, no partners He has”.

In this statement, there is confession of God’s oneness and in this type [of certitude], there is ascertainment of God’s power [over everything]. With this testification, the faith that is the basis of trust in God becomes complete. The meaning of completion of faith is that this statement is a necessary trait of one’s heart that would then become the dominant trait [by imbuing this trust in God in all matters of life - in one’s thoughts, feelings, words and deeds that emanate from them]. As far as Divine unity and oneness is concerned, it is the real [underlying] principle.

Four Degrees of Divine Oneness: There are four ranks of Divine unity and oneness (*Tawheed*): first rank is of the kernel (core), second rank is the kernel of the kernel, third is of the inner skin, and fourth of the outer shell. We will explain this with the example of a walnut. It has two skins then there is kernel and within kernel is the oil which can be termed as the kernel of the kernel. The first rank of Divine oneness is that the servant says  (There is no god but God) with one’s tongue but one’s heart is negligent of it like the [testification of] Divine oneness of hypocrites.

Second rank is that one ascertains the meaning of this statement [of affirmation of Divine unity and oneness] as is done by ordinary Muslims. This is the Divine oneness of the laymen and their belief. Third rank is that with the light of truth, its meaning gets unveiled to be witnessed by one [with the inner mystic spiritual eye of certitude]. This is the [spiritual] station of those who have attained closeness to God (*Muqarrabeen* or Gnostics or friends and intimates of God). The meaning of this unveiling is that one sees a lot of things and attains their knowledge but considers the source and origin of everything as the Being of the One, the Irresistible, the Omnipotent (God). Fourth rank

is that one only witnesses the Existence of that One Being (God) [with the inner eye of the soul], sees only His existence in all things. This is the Divine oneness of those who have attained closeness to God (Gnostics). *Sufis* (spiritual travelers on the path to God) call it "*Fana fi al-Tawheed*" (annihilation of the lower self in Divine unity and oneness), in other words, these people consider their own lower selves (*Nafs*) and all other creations as extinct and annihilated before the Being of God. First person is a believer in Divine unity and oneness by tongue only. Second one is a believer in Divine unity and oneness in terms of one's heart ascertaining the meaning of this statement of affirmation, however, the beliefs that one has in the heart that are contrary to it, one does not refute them. This type of belief in Divine unity is a knot on the heart that does not allow the illumination and expansion of the heart. Third rank is of a believer in Divine unity and oneness who witnesses only one Doer [of everything that is happening in one's life, around one, and in the world], in other words, this matter of truth becomes clear to one and one starts to see just One Doer and one starts to see the reality of all matters [as the doors of wisdom and new vistas of illuminations open up for one]. Fourth rank is of that person who witnesses only One Being, one does not see any existence besides God, one does not see the things of the world by means of abundance and multiplicity but sees them by way of unity [as being the act of God]. This is the highest rank of Divine unity and oneness (*Tawheed*).

These are the four ranks and [spiritual] stations of the believers in Divine unity and oneness. As far as the fourth (highest) rank is concerned, it is outside the domain of the knowledge of external matters (exoteric knowledge or "*Ilm Mu'amla*") [and rather enters into the domain of esoteric knowledge ("*Ilm al-Mukashafa*" or knowledge of spiritual unveilings)], hence it is useless to make it a topic of discussion here [as that is not the purpose of this book] and trust in God (*Tawakkul*) is not based on this, instead the state of trust in God is attained by the third type of Divine unity and oneness. First type is hypocrisy, second type is mere ascertainment, now only third type is left, as trust in God is based on that. It is because for trust in God, merely the ascertainment of the heart is not sufficient, instead, spiritual unveiling (*Kashf*) and witnessing (*Mushahada*) are also necessary.

The third rank of Divine unity and oneness is that this matter becomes unveiled to you that there is no doer other than God and matters such as creations, sustenance, giving, withholding [of blessings both material and immaterial], life, death, richness, poverty, etc., that can be given any name, their creator and originator is only God and none other than God. When this matter is unveiled to you, you will not look at anyone or anything other than God, you will fear only God, you will have hope only from God, you will have confidence only in God, you will have trust only on God [and none other than God] because He is the Doer, He is the Originator, and He is the Inventor. All existences other than Him, are conquered and subjugated [to His command and will], and they do not have the power to move even an insignificant particle from among the dominions of the heavens and the earth against the will of their Creator. When doors of

spiritual unveilings open up for someone, they become clear to one even more, with [spiritual] witnessing.

Conversation of Pen with a Possessor of the Heart

We will now provide an example of a pen to explain trust in God (*Tawakkul*). A spiritual traveler (*Salik*) whose heart was illumined with the light of God, saw a paper that was previously white but later turned black [due to writings on it]. He asked the paper, "Why did your face become black?" It replied, "This question of yours is not based on fairness. I have not made my face black by myself. Ask the ink. It was residing in the inkpot that was its abode. Then the ink left its country and made my face its destination and with oppression and force, came to reside on me". Spiritual traveler said, "You are telling the truth". He then asked the ink, "Why did you make the paper black?" It said, "You have not done justice with me. I was sitting in the inkpot with tranquility and had no intention to come out of it. Pen oppressed me because of its evil greed and forced me to leave my country (home or abode), made me homeless, scattered my unity, and scattered me in this white field (paper) and destroyed me. That's why, you should ask the pen instead of me". Spiritual traveler said, "You are telling the truth", then questioned the pen about its oppression and asked, "Why did you expel the ink from its country and separated it from its loved ones?" It replied, "You should ask the hand and the fingers. I was just standing by the streams in the form of a green reed (stalk). One man came to me with a knife, took my skin off, torn me away from my clothes, pulled me out from the root and cut me into pieces. Then he took a piece, carved it, cut its head [to make it narrow], then dipped me in bitter and black ink. He takes services from me and forces me to walk on my head. My whole body is already injured at his hand. Now you are sprinkling salt of your questions on my injuries to cause even more inflammation. That's why, stay away from me and ask this question to the man who made me without feet and hands". Spiritual traveler also ascertained the truthfulness of the pen then asked the hand, "Why do you oppress the pen so much by disregarding its wishes to use it for your own wishes?" Hand replied, "I am only a combination of flesh, bones and blood. Have you seen a piece of flesh that is capable of oppression, or a body that moves on its own? I am only a riding mount on which a rider is mounted. That rider is called ability (*Qudrah*). That rider moves me around and forces me to go around on different parts of earth. Do you see that trees and rocks do not move from their places on their own until someone moves them? My hand and the hands of dead people look the same in their shape and form. Then what is the matter that dead people's hands do not pick up a pen, but my hand picks it up. It is known from this that I have no relationship with pen. You should ask this question to ability. I am merely a riding mount that a rider forces to move with the power of its whip".

Spiritual traveler believes the answer from the hand and asks ability, “What right do you have to use the hand? Why do you use it for your purposes and why do you force it to move?” Ability replied, “Do not blame me. Often times, the blaming person oneself deserves to be blamed and the one who is blamed is proven to be innocent. My state has not been revealed to you. How can you say that I have done something wrong by riding the hand? I was riding it (hand) even before its movement but I was quietly asleep. The state of my silence and sleep was such that people used to consider me dead or extinct. In other words, I was neither active on my own nor did I move anything else until a messenger (instigator) came and moved me and forced me to do the work for which you are making me a target of reproach. I did not have the strength within me to disobey its command. I was compelled to work according to its desire. The name of that messenger is intention (*Iradah*). I only know it by its name and by its action that one day it attacked me and woke me up from my deep sleep and forced me to move the hand. I did not find a way other than acting according to its command”.

Spiritual traveler said, “You are telling the truth”. He then asked intention, “What had happened to you that you disturbed the tranquil and satisfied ability [that was lying dormant] and forced it to move so that it had no way out but to obey your command?” Intention replied, “Do not be so quick to blame me. It is possible that I might have been compelled to do so and you are just blaming me for no reason. I did not get up on my own, but I had been made to get up. I did not wake up on my own, instead, I have been woken up by an immense and irresistible force, otherwise, I had been very tranquil and was staying in my place. A messenger of knowledge by the tongue of the intellect came to me from the court of the heart and ordered me to wake up the ability. Therefore, out of compulsion, I woke up the ability. I am conquered by and subjugated to knowledge and intellect and I don’t know for which crime of mine, I have been made subservient to knowledge and intellect and have been declared to be their subordinate and obedient to them. Not until this mighty messenger came to me, I was quiet and peaceful. Now this is my ruler, whether it is just or oppressive, I am compelled to obey its command. When it commands me with anything, I do not have any strength to oppose it. I swear by my own life to say that when it is worried and hesitant in any matter, I stay silent, but my attention is towards it. When it makes a final decision, I become compelled by the demand of my nature to obey it and wake up ability. Now you should ask knowledge and keep your criticism away from me”.

Spiritual traveler said, “You are telling the truth”, then turned towards knowledge, intellect and the heart and reproached them for subjugating intention for instigating ability. Intellect responded, “I am a [light giving] lamp that has not been lit (illumined) by myself but someone else has illumined me”. Heart responded, “I am a tablet that has not spread out by myself but someone else has spread me”. Knowledge said, “I am an inscription that gets imprinted on the whiteness of the tablet of the heart after the lamp of intellect is lit up. I do not become inscribed by myself but someone else inscribes on me. That’s why, you should ask the pen that inscribed on me”. After this struggle, the spiritual traveler does not find an answer that would satisfy one so that one can be

contented with it. Hence, the spiritual traveler gets perplexed and perturbed and says, "I am traversing this path for a long time and have arrived here by traversing many destinations. Whoever I came across along the way, I have asked the same question. Everyone handed (referred) me over to someone else. Although, I was happy with this struggle because every answer was reasonable and convinced the heart, but this last answer is beyond my comprehension. Knowledge says, 'I am an inscription that came into existence from underneath [the tip of] the pen', although pen is made out of reed, tablet is made out of iron or wood and inscription is of black or red ink and lamp is lit of fire. Here I am listening to the talk of the tablet, lamp, and inscription although I don't see any of them'". Knowledge says in response to that, "Your capital (wealth) is less and your provision [for the travel] is limited, your ride is weak, and the path you travel on has innumerable dangers. That's why, it is better for you that you leave this path and adopt a different path as you are not eligible for it. One who is eligible for something, is provided with the means of reaching it. If you really want to complete the travel on this path, then listen to this very carefully:

Three Realms: Remember, there are three realms for this journey of yours. One is the realm of *'Alam al-Mulk wa as-Shahada* also known as realm of the appearance of Divine Omnipotence and Power. Paper, ink, pen, hand, etc., belong to the same realm. You gradually advanced forward from these things. Second is the angelic realm (*'Alam al-Malakoot*) that comes after me (i.e., knowledge). When you exceed over me, you will reach the destinations of this realm. I don't know, how you will stay safe in them. Third is the realm of absolute Divine immensity or sovereignty (*'Alam al-Jabarut*). You have traversed its first three destinations, in other words, ability, intention and knowledge. This realm serves as a means between the first two realms. One who walks on earth walks on *'Alam al-Mulk wa as-Shahada* [or realm of the appearance of Divine Omnipotence and Power].

Beginning of the Angelic Realm (*'Alam al-Malakoot*): The beginning of the angelic realm is that you witness that pen that writes on the tablet of the heart and attain that certitude with which walking on water is accomplished. You must have heard the saying of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) when it was mentioned to him that Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) used to walk on water, he said:

لَوْ ازْدَادَ يَقِينُهُ لَمَشَى عَلَى الْهَوَاءِ

'If he had more certitude, he would have walked on air'".

Listening to this speech of knowledge, the spiritual traveler said, "I am perplexed about my state. My heart shudders at the dangers of the path you have pointed out. I am not sure if I can cross the vast dangerous terrain that you pointed out. Can you inform me of any indication of the pen?" Knowledge said, "There is an indication (sign) of it and that is that you open your eyes, collect their light together to look at me. If you see that pen that is used to write a statement on the tablet of the heart then you will be termed

as eligible for the angelic realm (*'Alam al-Malakoot*) because one who advances from the realm of absolute Divine immensity or Divine sovereignty (*'Alam al-Jabarut*) to the angelic realm, starts to see that pen! That's why, when the following sacred verse was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) at the very beginning of his prophethood, he witnessed the pen:

'Read and your Lord is Majestic and Honorable who taught with the pen, taught human being what one did not know.'" (Qur'an, Chapter 96, Verses 3-5)

Spiritual traveler said, "I have my eyes wide open and have tried to look with great focus but [still] have neither seen that pen nor the tablet. If I have seen any pen, they are the external pen that are used for writing". Knowledge said, "What you are saying is strange! Have you not heard that the way the owner of the house is, is the way the goods in the house are? Do you not know that the Being of God, does not resemble any other being? His hand is not like any other hands, His pen does not resemble other pens, and His speech has no resemblance with any other speech. These are Divine matters and they are related to the angelic realm. God neither is a body nor is He inside a place, while all other things are bodies as well as in their places. His hand is neither flesh nor blood and bones, contrary to other hands that are combination of flesh, blood, and bones. His pen is neither made of reed nor is His tablet made of wood. His speech is neither made of letters and sounds nor is His mark made of imprints and His ink is not composed of dyes. If you don't see the matters as they really are, then you are deficient. In reality, complete human beings are those who consider God above and purified of having any body, and deficient are those who resemble Him to a body. You are in between the two [groups], neither belonging to here or there. Tell me how you have exempted God from bodies and [human] qualities? How have you considered His speech devoid of any letter and sound? You are hesitant about His hand, pen, and tablet. One who thinks of God as resembling the visible bodies is merely doing a resemblance and one who construes it as an inner meaning that is only witnessed with the eye of insight, then it is an indication that one considers God as above these [human] resemblances and is a traveler on the path of Divine glorification and praise. Now one should tread the path and with the innermost heart, listen to the Divine commandments, haply one may find the path of the lightening of Divine illumination".

When the spiritual traveler heard this insightful talk, one became informed of one's mistakes and realized that one is suspended between resembling [of God to bodies] and Divine glorification. With this realization, the fire of rage on oneself ignited in one's heart and since the [illuminating] lamp of one's heart had such purified and limpid oil

that was ready to burn even without fire, that's why, when the fire of knowledge reached it, it became light upon light. After seeing this, knowledge said to the spiritual traveler, "Make use of this opportunity and open your eyes, perhaps you will find guidance". Hence, one opened one's eyes and God's pen with all its characteristics revealed itself to one which is indispensable for Divine glorification. It is neither made of reed, nor with wood or its sharpened edge. It is busy in writing different types of knowledges on the human hearts. Its tip is on the surface of every heart, although ostensibly, it does not have a tip. The spiritual traveler was surprised to see this, and said, "In reality, knowledge is indeed the best companion [as without it, we are all ignorant]. May God grant it the best recompense. All the characteristics of pen that it informed me about, they all became visible. Now that pen is no longer like other pens to me". After that, the spiritual traveler bid farewell to knowledge and thanked it and told it, "I stayed with you for a long time, now I have the determination to go to the pen and ask it about its state".

Conversation between the Spiritual Traveler and the Pen: Hence, the spiritual traveler came to the pen and asked it, "O pen! Why do you keep writing knowledges in people's hearts all the time until these knowledges instigate intentions, and ability rises up, and voluntary actions are done?" Pen relied, "Have you forgotten about what you had seen in the realm of Divine Omnipotence and Power (*'Alam al-Mulk wa as-Shahada*)? Have you ignored the response you heard from the pen? As far as I remember, it did not accept the responsibility of writing [onto the hearts] instead, it deferred it to God". Spiritual traveler said, "I have neither forgotten that, nor have I ignored the response from the pen". Pen replied, "Have you not heard that God created Adam (father of humanity) on His own image? You should inquire about my state from the right hand of the King. I am in His control, He is the one who moves me, I am in His control. Meaning there is no difference between God's pen and the pen of the human being in terms of both being subjugated. If there is a difference, it is only the difference between external appearance". Spiritual traveler asked, "What is meant by the right hand of the King?" Pen replied, "Its meaning is what's mentioned in below verse:

وَٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتُ مَطْوِيَّٰتُۢ بِيَمِينِهِۦ

"And heavens will be wrapped up on His right hand." (Qur'an, Chapter 39, Verse 67)

Similarly, pen is also in His right hand, He moves it around as He wishes.

Spiritual Traveler's Journey Towards the Right Hand: After this conversation, the spiritual traveler started traveling to the right [hand of the Divine Providence]. There one saw amazing mind-boggling wonders. The pen did not even have a fraction of them in comparison. These wonders were such that they cannot be explained in words, rather, if they are explained in thousands of books, even the hundredth part of them could not be explained. In short, that is the right hand but not like what other right hands are. It has an arm but not like other arms. It has fingers but they do not have the slightest resemblance to other fingers. Spiritual traveler saw the pen moved by the right hand then understood that all that the pen expressed are correct. In reality, this is all

the game of the right hand. Hence, the spiritual traveler asked the right hand as to why it moves around the pen and it responded, "My response is the same as was provided by the hand from the realm of the appearance of Divine Omnipotence and Power (*'Alam al-Mulk wa as-Shahada*) [or this visible, material world], in other words, it attributed this movement to the ability (*Qudrah*). I also say the same thing - this is the game of the ability". Upon hearing this, the spiritual traveler went to the ability, where he saw such wonders, he had not seen even a fraction of them before. Frightened one asked, "Why do you move the right hand?" Ability replied, "I am just a characteristic, you should ask the holder (owner) of this characteristic - One who has been characterized by this characteristic - the All Powerful One. Only the holder of this characteristic can inform you about the reason. This characteristic is merely subservient to its Holder". Upon hearing this response, spiritual traveler was close to getting one's feet swerved on daring to ask the Absolute Powerful (God), [but] one was granted the firmness of one's feet [on the path of truth] and heard the call from the court of the Absolute Powerful:

لَا يُسْئَلُ عَمَّا يَفْعَلُ وَهُمْ يُسْئَلُونَ

"Whatever He does, no one can question Him while everyone else can be questioned [on what they do]." (Qur'an, Chapter 21, Verse 23)

Upon hearing this, spiritual traveler was overcome by trembling and awe and fell unconscious. One was inflicted with it for a long time. When one regained consciousness, one said, "O God! You are exalted above all imperfections, shortcomings, faults, and weaknesses. Your glory is magnificent! I repent to You and trust in You alone and accept faith in this reality that You are the mighty majestic ruler, One and only, irresistible, dominant, and overpowering. Neither do I fear anyone besides You, nor do I have hope with anyone besides You. I seek refuge from Your reckoning in Your clemency and from Your wrath in Your acceptance. I have no path in front of me except that I pray to You in utter humility that, 'O God! Open my heart so that I can know You. Open the knot on my tongue so I can praise and glorify You!'" In response to this supplication (prayer), the proclamation from the Divine Presence came, "Beware! Don't proceed further! Do not be greedy in glorification and praise! Go to the service of the Messenger of God [Muhammad] (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) and take what he gives you and desist from what he stops you from! And say what he asks you to say. See he [(Peace and blessings of God be upon him)] pleaded this [supplication] in the Divine Court:

سُبْحَانَكَ لَا أُحْصِي ثَنَاءً عَلَيْكَ أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ

'Glory be to You! You are exalted above all imperfections, shortcomings, faults, and weaknesses. I cannot even praise you completely. You are as You have praised Yourself!'"

Spiritual traveler entreated, “O Lord of all the Universes! If tongue is not permitted to exceed this limit, can the heart have the greed for Your Gnosis?” Reply came, “Do you want to exceed even the Gnostics! Go to the greatest Gnostic (*Siddiq al-Akbar*) [Abu Bakr (May God be pleased with him), who has the highest rank in Divine proximity and Gnosis after all the prophets] and follow him. Have you not heard what he said?

‘Inability to perceive the perception is the perception’.

Your share from My Presence is that you are deprived of My Presence. You do not have the strength to witness the [Divine] Severity (*Jalal*) and [Divine] Beauty (*Jamal*)”.

After hearing this, the spiritual traveler walked back on the path one traversed. Whatever questions one asked from the pen, knowledge, intention and ability, etc., one apologized to them and confessed one’s ignorance and said, “Forgive me, I was a stranger (new) to this path. One who is a stranger becomes terrified [of new territories]. I rejected you, that is totally my fault and ignorance. I am now informed about your excuses and am now familiar with this reality that all the realms [realm of the appearance of Divine Omnipotence and Power (‘*Alam al-Mulk wa as-Shahada*), the angelic realm (‘*Alam al-Malakoot*), and the realm of absolute immensity or Divine sovereignty (‘*Alam al-Jabarut*)], only the commandment of the Irresistible One is implemented. You all move by His act of moving and are conquered and subjugated by His all-encompassing might. He is the First (*Al-Awwal*), He is the Last (*Al-Aakhir*), He is the Manifest (*Al-Zahir*), He is the Hidden (*Al-Batin*)”.

Conflict between First and Last, Manifest and Hidden: When the spiritual traveler explained these details to the denizens of the realm of the appearance of Divine Omnipotence and Power (*'Alam al-Mulk wa as-Shahada*) or the visible world, they were astonished and started asking, “How can it be that He is the First and the Last, the Hidden and the Manifest because these qualities are opposite of each other? One who is first, will not be last and one who is hidden, will not be manifest”. Its answer is that, “He is far above all existences because all existences came into being by an order from His Being. He is the last because for those who traverse the [spiritual] path, He is their final destination. If they are advancing from one destination to the next in the path, the culmination of their path and their journey, is in His Being. In this way, He is the last in being witnessed but first in existence. Such is His state in being the Hidden and the Manifest. Those, who while residing in the visible world (first realm) using their five senses want to perceive Him, He is hidden for them. Those who search for Him with the illumination of the light of their hearts, He is Manifest for them”. This is the practical implication of the reality of the Divine Unity and Oneness (*Tawheed*) in action. In other words, those on whom the reality has been revealed that real doer is just One Being, for them, this is their method of [attaining] Divine Unity and Oneness.

States and Actions of Trust in God

The [spiritual] station of trust in God is made up of knowledge, state, and action. Knowledge has been mentioned before. Now listen to this about the state that in reality is the trust in God. Knowledge is its origin and action is its fruit (outcome). It should be known that trust in God comes from trusteeship, in other words, one has entrusted one's work to someone else, and has confidence in someone. Someone who has been entrusted with one's work is the trustee, one who hands over the work is said to be entrusting but the condition is that entrusting person has full confidence on the entrusted and does not consider one incapable. Hence, there should be confidence in the heart in the entrusted person, in a trust. Lawyers that are appointed in worldly disputes have the same condition. Hence, if someone accuses you with a false accusation or unjustifiably takes away a thing owned by you then you appoint a lawyer for ending this oppression, who becomes your voice in the court of the judge, and tries to deliver you from the injustice and deception of the accuser (plaintiff).

You will not be considered as trusting your lawyer (trustee) and satisfied with trusteeship until you believe in four matters: first is that the trustee has the high level of guidance [for doing the right thing for you], second is the ability [of the trustee to do the needed for you], third is the high level of eloquence [in advocating your case], and fourth is [trustee's] complete affection and benevolence [for you]. Guidance is necessary so that the trustee is aware of the places of deceptions to the extent that one sees subtleties that are not obvious [and pose danger to you]. Ability and strength are necessary so that the trustee can proclaim the truth with full courage, and not be hesitant to do anything [related to the matter trustee has been entrusted with], not be fearful of anyone, not shy away from anyone, and not have cowardice. Often times, the trustee finds out the reason for other party's deception but due to fear, cowardice, shyness, or some other reason, is not able to express it and becomes weak in proclaiming the truth. Eloquence is necessary so that a trustee can express [oneself] effectively which is also a type of ability, although it is related to the tongue. By means of eloquence, a human being is able to express matters of the heart in such a way that the listener gets impressed, otherwise, it is not necessary that any person can expose the deception of the opposing party after discovering it, and to verbalize the truth in such a way that would convince the listener. Affection is necessary so that the trustee (lawyer) can strive the utmost for the entrusting person and not refrain from doing anything necessary for one. It is because just being aware of the deceptive arguments, having ability to express the truth, and spreading pearls of eloquence, are not sufficient for the success of the case (entrusted task), until the trustee has interest in the being and circumstances of the entrusting person and considers their matters as one's own. If making money is the only purpose, then trustee will not care if the entrusting person is victorious or defeated or whether one achieves one's rights or lose them.

If entrusting person has doubt in even one of these four matters and considers the trustee weak in that matter or finds opposing party's trustee stronger in all fours matters compared to one's own trustee, then one cannot have complete satisfaction and confidence on one's own trustee (lawyer). One will remain doubtful and hesitant all the time in one's heart and will try to remove that fault from one's own trustee so that the advantage of the opposing party can be eliminated. To the extent the entrusting person has belief in one's trustee in all four matters, to that extent one will have confidence and satisfaction in one's heart [that one will achieve the desired goal]. As far as people's beliefs and conjectures are concerned, they are not the same in their strength and weaknesses, instead there are unspeakable differences. Hence, it is not surprising if people entrusting [a trustee] have vast discrepancies in their beliefs [or levels of trust] and the resulting confidence and satisfaction [in the trustee]. It is possible that one has no trust in the trustee while another one's trust reaches a level where there is no weakness left in that.

You would now have known the reality of trust by this explanation and can deduce trust in God (*Tawakkul*) from that. If by means of belief (*I'tiqad*) and spiritual unveiling (*Kashf*), it becomes firmly ingrained in your heart that there is no doer other than God. Also have this belief that God is well aware of the state and circumstances of His servants and is fully capable of being sufficient for them, His benevolence encompasses all creations and every particle in the heavens and the earth, and is all inclusive of them [without any exclusion]. Have this belief [too] that there is no limitation on His ability and power, there is no limitation on His knowledge, there is no limitation on His benevolence and largesse beyond which there is no benevolence and largesse. If all these beliefs and thoughts about God are firmly ingrained in you, then you will certainly have trust in Him and will have your attention on Him in every situation and state, will not pay attention to anyone other than Him, neither on your own being nor on your own power and strength because there is no power, mover and might other than God.

Reasons for Lack of Trust in God: If one's heart does not have this state of trust in God then there can be two reasons for that - either the certitude in one [or more] of the four matters would be weak or the reason could be the weakness of the heart, cowardice and worried thoughts. Sometimes, certitude is not weak, but superstitions dominate the heart and create repulsion and shortcoming in the inner temperament [towards having trust in God]. For example, if a person of intellect is asked to lie down with a dead body in grave [before the burial] or in the room or bed of the dead person, one will never agree to that, even though, one knows very well that dead body is lifeless and motionless like a stone and has no power to inflict harm, nor is it the way of God to bring someone back to life after death, although God has the power to bring back to life. It is just like the fact that God does not turn a pen in the hand of a writer into a snake, or transform a cat into a lion, although, He is capable of transforming a pen into a snake and a cat into a lion. It is learned from this that a person of intellect has this certitude that a dead cannot cause any harm but still one does not agree to sleep with a dead body on its bed or spend a night alone in the grave with it, even though one has no fear

of any other lifeless material objects. In reality, this is cowardice and fear and is a type of weakness. Very few people are devoid of such weaknesses. Some people are increasingly cowardly to the extent that their cowardice assumes the form of a disease and they are horrified with the mere imagination of being alone, forget about being alone with a dead.

Satisfaction and Certitude: Upshot of this discussion is that for [attaining] the perfection of trust in God, the strength of both the heart and certitude is needed, that's when heart receives satisfaction and peace. Then neither the strength of certitude alone is enough nor is it a source of satisfaction alone until the heart has the strength. In fact, the satisfaction of the heart is one thing and certitude is another (separate) thing. Sometimes, one has the certitude but not the satisfaction. It means that one has the certitude but the satisfaction and tranquility that one gets by witnessing [the truth first-hand with one's own eyes] is not there. Initially, certitude does not engender satisfaction but it gradually forms the soul at peace (*Nafs al-Mutma'inna*) [i.e., the lower self with its base desires and negative qualities, transformed into a self that is at peace with God and with everything good that was previously unthinkable]. Many people are such that they do not have the certitude but have the satisfaction, such as people who follow wrong and harmful beliefs that they do not have any certitude on, but are still satisfied with them out of stubbornness and disregard for everything contrary to their wrong and harmful beliefs. It is learned from this that cowardice and audacity are part of human temperament and in their presence, certitude is not useful. This is also one of the reasons for opposing trust in God just like one of the reasons is that the certitude in one [or more] of the four aforementioned matters required for trust, is weak. When all causes of certitude and satisfaction are combined together [including four matters required for trust] then one develops absolute certitude in God [and hence have complete trust in Him].

Three Degrees of Trust in God: In previous pages, reality of trust in God and state of trust in God have been explained. Now we will explain the degrees of this state. There are a total of three degrees of trust in God that are based on the strength or weakness of the state of trust in God. First degree is what has been explained just now, i.e., a servant's (human being's) trust is God is like the trust that a trusting person has on one's trustee (or a client has on one's lawyer). Second degree that is higher than the first is that the trusting person's state with God is like that of a baby with the mother - a baby neither knows and recognizes anyone other than one's mother, nor does one plead to anyone other than the mother or have confidence in anyone else. When a baby sees his or her mother, one clings to her, even if she hits, the baby still seeks shelter in her, if something happens in her presence or absence, only mother's name comes on baby's lips (i.e., baby only cries for the mother), only mother's thought occurs to the heart of the baby, and mother's embrace is baby's only shelter. A baby has complete confidence and certitude in mother's caretaking, sufficiency, and affection that is not devoid of perception. To the extent a baby had discernment, baby perceives it. It seems that the confidence and certitude in mother has become baby's nature.

However, if the baby is asked about this habit or nature then he or she can neither explain it nor can bring to one's mind its details.

One whose heart is focused on God, the sight of such a one will only be on His kindness and will have confidence on His giving and generosity. One will have such intense love (*Ishq*) for Him that a baby has for his or her mother. In reality, this is the one who has trust in God. A baby also has trust in his or her mother. The difference between this (second) degree [of trust in God] and the previous (first) degree is that one who is in this degree is such a practitioner of trust in God that one is annihilated (extinct) in this trust. Such a one does not get inclined towards the reality of trust in God, rather, one is only inclined towards [and attentive to] that Being on whom the trust is placed, there is no room left in the heart of such a person for anyone other than Him, while a person in first degree of trust in God strives to have trust in God. This is a person of trust in God by effort and struggle while one in second degree, is a person of trust by one's innate nature. One in first degree is not annihilated in trust in God as such a person is inclined towards one's trust in God and is consciously aware of it, and that is an impediment towards looking at the One who is being trusted (God).

The third degree of trust in God which is also the highest degree, is that the trusting person, in one's movements and stillness in front of God, is like a dead person in the hands of a bather [who washes the dead body before the burial], in other words, thinks of one's lower self as dead which is moved around by the Eternal Ability (God) just like a dead body is moved at will by the bather. Such a trusting person has this firm certitude that the fountainhead of movement, ability, intention, knowledge, and all qualities is just One Being and that everything is born without its will [by the Will of its Creator]. This person is in waiting for something unforeseen to happen and is different from the baby who runs after his or her mother, pulls her garment, pleads to her, while this person is like the child who has this expectation that one's mother will go out searching for one on her own, if one does not hold her garment, she will still lift the child up into her lap, if child does not ask for food, she will still take the initiative and provide it. This degree of trust in God requires that the trusting person having confidence in God's providence and attention, does not ask for anything for oneself and having this certitude that He will bestow even without asking, rather, the thing that is being asked, He Himself bestows better than that. Hence, He already has bestowed innumerable blessings without anyone seeking them or having any right to be entitled for them. This is the requirement of the last and the highest degree [of trust in God] while second degree requires one to desist from asking anyone other than God.

Three Degrees of People who Trust in God: There are three degrees of those with trust in God. First degree belongs to the spiritual elites and Gnostics, who without taking any provisions, go around in rugged, deserted places and jungles and rely on God. In the meantime, if they find anything in the jungles that will fill their stomachs, they take it, otherwise, they would remain perseverant and agreeing with the Divine will. Sometimes, even those people starve who take provisions with them which can either

be lost, or finished, or they deviate to the wrong path and their provisions get finished. Death is an undeniable reality; it comes to those who have provisions and to those who do not have provisions, hence, it is better to die after relying on God's provisions.

Second degree is to get restricted to one's home or a place that is either in a city or village where there is human population and while living there, one is engaged in Divine remembrance and contemplation. This degree is less than the first degree, but this is also trust in God because one sets aside outer means of economy and sustenance to have confidence in God's providence and have this certitude that God will fulfil one's needs with hidden means. This person has one's eyes not on the people of the city or village but on the Being, who provides sustenance to the people of the city. It is also God's Grace that He makes people pay attention to such a one and have them look after one.

Third degree is to not stay restricted to the home, instead, one should go out and with all the conditions mentioned in the Book of Earning Livelihood (Second volume of Ghazali's *magnum opus* "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God") one struggles for earning a livelihood. Such a one would not be outside the bounds of reliance and trust in God on the condition that one does not depend on one's sufficiency, power, status, or skills because these things can be gone in one moment, instead, one's eyes are on the Real Provider who protected these things and made easy for one the means of livelihood. Compared to God, one should consider one's sufficiency, ability, and strength for earning like a pen in the hand of a king. The eyes of the associates of the king are not on his pen but on his heart as to what thought will he have and who he will pay attention to and decide about.

One who earns for one's children or for spending on the poor and needy is someone who earns from one's body but detached from one's heart [to any form of worldliness or worldly attachments]. The state of such a one is better and praiseworthy compared to one who just sits at home [without doing anything]. The argument for this is that earning a livelihood is not against trust in God if conditions are met [to earn livelihood without getting entrapped in worldly attachments and greed] and one takes care of the knowledge of and closeness to God.

Incident of Umar (May God be pleased with him) about Trust in God in an Epidemic

We will present here a historical incident from Umar bin al-Khattab (May God be pleased with him) to clarify further the trust in God. Once he traveled with other prophetic companions to Syria. When he arrived at Jabiah that is close to Damascus, they found out that Syria was severely inflicted with the spread of the epidemic of Pestilence (bubonic plague - a contagious or infectious epidemic disease that is virulent and devastating) [that was resulting in many deaths in that region]. Now the question arose if they should enter Syria or not. This question resulted in prophetic companions

getting divided into two groups [in terms of what to do about it]. One group said, "We will not go there because of the bubonic plague because going there [under these circumstances] is tantamount to jumping into a raging fire". Other group said, "We will go and have trust in God and whatever is [Divinely] destined for us we will not avoid it, nor will we fear death and will not get included in the group of people about whom God said:

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى ٱلَّذِينَ خَرَجُواْ مِن دِيَـٰرِهِمْ وَهُمْ أُلُوفٌ حَذَرَ ٱلْمَوْتِ

'Do you not know the story of the people who left their homes and they were thousands in numbers in order to avoid death.'" (Qur'an, Chapter 2, Verse 243)

Both groups came to Umar (May God be pleased with him) and asked for his opinion about the matter. The group that was insistent on entering Syria said, "We should not run away from God's destiny". Umar (May God be pleased with him) said, "Yes, we will escape from God's destiny towards God's destiny". After that, he narrated an example saying, "Suppose anyone of you have goats and two valleys to take them to for grazing. One of those valleys is lush green and the other one is dry and barren. If this man adopts the lush green valley, then he will be the one to let the goats graze by the destiny and command of God, and if he goes to the dry and barren valley, he would again be the one doing so by the destiny and command of God". The prophetic companions ascertained the truth of that statement. After that he asked for Abdur Rahman ibn 'Awf (May God be pleased with him) to be brought to him by a messenger. He arrived a day later and this point of difference of opinion was presented to him [for his own opinion]. Abdur Rahman ibn 'Awf (May God be pleased with him) said, "In this matter, my opinion is the same as what I heard from the tongue of the Messenger of God Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)". Umar (May God be pleased with him) said, "Glory be to God! If Prophet Muhammad's (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) instruction is present regarding this matter, then there is no room left for any disagreement on the issue. Please tell us what he said". Abdur Rahman ibn 'Awf (May God be pleased with him) said, "I have heard this from the tongue of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) that he said:

إِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ بِالْوَبَاءِ فِي أَرْضٍ فَلَا تُقْدِمُوا عَلَيْهِ وَإِذَا وَقَعَ وَأَنْتُمْ بِهَا فَلَا تَخْرُجُوا فِرَارًا مِنْهَا

'If you hear that there is epidemic going on somewhere then do not go there [as you will be liable to getting inflicted with it, resulting is further spreading it to others] and if it (epidemic) happens (starts) at a place where you are already present from before then don't escape from it [because this will result in spreading it far and wide making it difficult or impossible to contain it]'".

Umar (May God be pleased with him) was extremely pleased to hear this prophetic narration and expressed gratitude to God for his opinion to be in line with prophetic guidance on the issue and he brought back all prophetic companions with him from Jabiah [without entering the epidemic zone]. (This tradition and the entire incident have been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Sahih Bukhari*)

It is worth noting here that all prophetic companions agreed on not doing *Tawakkul* (trust in God) [in a matter related to a raging epidemic. Explanation of this is that they did not just say "I have trust in God" then entered the epidemic zone, instead, they used the best method, known through prophetic guidance, to not enter the epidemic zone in order to stop the spread, then relied on God for its success. Hence, they displayed trust in God in this manner]. It is learned from this that in matters like this, *Tawakkul* (i.e., saying "I have trust in God" then not doing the needful) is not a requirement [in life threatening situations like this, instead, one should employ all possible means to preserve life and human well-being then rely on God for its success].

Injunction to not Escape from Epidemic Zones: Here the question arises that if safeguarding oneself from harmful things is not included in having trust in God (i.e., just saying that "I have trust in God" without doing the needful) then why there is a prohibition from escaping the land where you are residing, and an epidemic breaks out there? In medical science, the cause of epidemic has been declared to be the air. It's obvious that [in a situation like this] air is harmful and refraining from harmful things is the very best cure then why the permission has not been granted for escaping from an epidemic zone? The answer to this question is that safeguarding against harmful things is by [scholarly] consensus not against having trust in God. For example, surgeries are done for protection against harmful things. However, it seems that escaping from an epidemic zone is a different matter. It is true that the cause of epidemic is air but merely the air striking against the external body cannot be a cause of it, instead, when putrefied and bad air enters the body by means of breathing, it leaves its harmful effects on the heart, lungs and membranes in the internal body. It is learned from this that an epidemic does not impact the outer body but rather impacts the inner system of the body. That's why, if someone lives in a city and epidemic break out there then there is a greater likelihood that one may not have stayed protected from its impact. It is also possible that the epidemic may not have much impact on one. In that case, escaping from the epidemic would be a superstitious reason of protection against it. However, if that had been the only reason for escaping the epidemic zone then it would have still been fine, but there are many other reasons for its prohibition. They include the reason that if healthy people are allowed to leave epidemic zones, then no one in the city would be left except for the sick and patients and no one in the city would be left who could give them food, water and medicine and because of their own illnesses, they would not be able to fulfil their own needs. In that case, escaping of healthy people from the city is tantamount to killing the sick and the ill because there is a possibility of their recovery on the condition that the healthy would stay there and provide them with the suitable needed care. Muslims have been described [in a prophetic tradition] as a building where one part [of the building] supports the other [and as a result the entire building stands] or they have been compared to a body, if one part of it is in pain, all the other parts of the body feel that pain. In our assessment, the reason for the prohibition of escaping is this very mutual cooperation, compassion, affection, and brotherhood. There may be other reasons for that as well that God knows best. However, for the people who have not entered the city [or an area afflicted with plague or epidemic], they

have been commanded to stay out [of that area] because neither the putrefied and poisonous air has attacked them nor do the sick in the city need them to the extent that if they (outsiders) don't enter, they (the sick and patients) will die as people to take care of them are already present from before. However, if no one is left in the city who can look after the patients and take care of their food, water, and medicines, then in that case, some people can enter the city [or epidemic zone] to help them and it won't be surprising that this act of theirs, gets termed as a praiseworthy act. It is because the apprehension of harm is a superstitious matter [as it may or may not happen] and saving people from danger [and hence saving lives] is a certain matter [as it is needed for sure]. That is the reason why escaping from bubonic plague and epidemic has been declared as running away from the battlefield (narrated in *Hadith* collection *Musnad Ahmed* on the authority of Aisha [May God be pleased with her]) because escaping from the city [or area] afflicted with epidemic is equivalent to destroying lives.

These are subtle and complex matters. One who ignores them and only looks at the outer words and meaning of prophetic narrations, often gets into errors and misunderstandings about these matters. Worshippers and abstinent [from worldliness] [who are not necessarily knowledgeable] frequently encounter these errors because they make mistakes due to their lack of knowledge and short-sightedness. It is the honor of knowledge that in such matters, a person of knowledge does not get trapped by the deception of sight, instead, one combines seemingly different things to find the right path [of guidance in all situations].

Chapter 16 – Love, Longing, and Intimacy with the Divine, and Accepting the Divine Will and Decree are Imperatives for Fostering Inner Peace, Tranquility and Happiness

Of all noble inner human qualities, love is the most superior of all. It is a trait that conquers all and effaces and eradicates from the root everything that is negative, vile, and destructive. It's the all-conquering and all-liberating inner quality with deep spiritual implications. But the love that is being referred to here, which is the highest form of love, is the Divine Love or Love for the Divine. This Divine Love effuses into the love of fellow humans and fellow creations as they are all part of God's family without any exclusion. Love that is exclusively a love for carnal appetites is incapable of rising to such status. There is no need for justice and conflict resolution when there is mutual love between people and nations. It's a Divine attribute that has been bestowed and gifted to the human being to subdue everything that is negative and vile and to break all shackles that restrains the soul from soaring to the greatest heights in spiritual ascension. A state when a human being is at peace with oneself and with one's inner self, engenders love for fellow human beings. It is love that conquers hate, liberates the soul from clutches that hold it down and lets it ascend into the Divine Presence. Divine love transforming into love for fellow human beings, leads to inner and outer peace and tranquility that one yearns for in the deepest recesses of one's soul. Love illuminates the path for all that is good. Longing for the Divine and intimacy with God (*Shawq* and *Uns*) are great propellers in the spiritual path leading to eternal bliss and never-ending triumph. Agreeing to God's decisions (*Rida*) even though it may not be to one's liking and even if it's hard to accept, submitting oneself wholeheartedly to the Will of God, liberates one from all anxieties, worries, sorrows and despair. It inspires one to find new ways to turn things around for the better and for finding new ways of doing things and employing out-of-box thinking to resolve personal and collective issues faced by humanity. Ghazali provided a deep, insightful and masterful exposition on love, longing and intimacy with the Divine and being at peace with the Divine decree in sixth chapter or book of the fourth volume of his *magnum opus* "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God". It is presented here in condensed form as follows [22]:

Love holds a very high rank in the [spiritual] stations because all stations after love are subservient to it such as longing (*Shawq*), intimacy (*Uns*) and acceptance (*Rida*) of the Divine and all stations prior to them like repentance, patience, abstinence [from worldliness], are all the factors that lead up to the [Divine] love. It is very hard to have faith in Divine love because some scholastic theologians have negated its possibility

[that one can really have Divine love] and have expressed that the meaning of Divine love [in their mistaken opinion] is to [merely] persevere in Divine obedience and worship and as far as real [Divine] love is concerned, it is impossible with God because such love can only be attained with someone of one's own kind [like another human being]. These scholastic theologians have not only negated [the possibility of attaining Divine] love, they have also negated other leading factors of love such as intimacy, longing, pleasure of entreating to the Divine (*Manajat*). That's why, it has become imperative that we [set the record straight and] elucidate the reality (truth) of the matter [to remove all misunderstandings and lack of knowledge on the subject in a rational manner to make it clear for all].

In this book, we will first provide evidence of [Divine] love from the sacred (Divine) law, then we will shed light on its reality and causes, then we will explain that the right of love exclusively belongs to God and the greatest pleasure of all is the pleasure of Divine vision (witnessing God) and this pleasure will increase manifold for those who possess Divine Gnosis (*Ma'rifa* - knowledge of, closeness and intimacy with God) in the world (during their worldly lives). After that, we will explain the causes of strengthening and propelling (powering) the love of God, the reason why people seem different in this respect, then it will be explained why people are unable to attain Divine Gnosis. After the detailed discussion on love, we will explain the meaning of longing [for the Divine] (*Shawq*) and signs of a servant's (human being's) love for God, then the meaning of longing for God (*Uns billah*) will be explained. After that, the meaning, and excellences of accepting the Divine will (*Rida*) will be mentioned. In the end, traditions about the lovers of God and their sayings will be mentioned.

Arguments and Proofs of Divine Love from the Sacred Law: There is a complete agreement among Muslims that it is obligatory for a servant [of God] to love God and Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him). Question is: If love is obligatory, how can one reject its existence? And those you construed (interpreted) [Divine] love as perseverance in Divine obedience, how can that be correct because obedience is the fruit (outcome) of love and is subservient to it, as first there is love and then the obedience of the Beloved? First, we will provide the arguments [as follows]. God says:

يُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَهُۥٓ

"He loves them, and they love Him." (Qur'an, Chapter 5, Verse 54)

وَٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓاْ أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِّلَّهِ

"And those who are believers are intense in their love for God." (Qur'an, Chapter 2, Verse 165)

Both of these verses not only prove the existence of love, but they also provide evidence of intensity and paucity in it. In many prophetic traditions, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) declared love of God as a condition of faith (*Iman*). In one tradition, Abu Zarreen 'Aqeeli (May God be pleased with him) asked, "O Messenger of God! What is faith?" He replied:

أَنْ يَكُوْنَ اللّٰهُ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ أَحَبَّ إِلَيْهِ مِمَّا سِوَاهُمَا

"It is that God and His Messenger become more beloved to the servant, compared to everyone other than them". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Musnad Ahmed*)

According to a famous prophetic tradition, Prophet Abraham (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) asked the angel of death when he came to take his soul [at the time of his death], "Have you seen a friend who kills one's friend?" God sent a Divine revelation to him, "O Abraham! Have you seen a lover who does not want to meet one's Beloved?" Prophet Abraham (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) told the angel of death, "Now take my soul away!" However, this matter is unveiled to the hearts of only those servants of God who love God from their hearts and long for Him. When they find out that death is a cause of meeting with the Beloved, their hearts get pulled towards Him. They do not have any other beloved whose pull and attraction they would feel. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said in his supplication:

اَللّٰهُمَّ ارْزُقْنِيْ حُبَّكَ وَحُبَّ مَنْ أَحَبَّكَ وَحُبَّ مَا يُقَرِّبُنِيْ إِلٰى حُبِّكَ وَاجْعَلْ حُبَّكَ أَحَبَّ إِلَيَّ مِنَ الْمَاءِ الْبَارِدِ

"O God! Grant me Your love and the love of those people who love You and the love of those things that draw me closer to Your love, and make Your love more beloved to me than the [love of] cold water [when it is needed the most to quench my thirst]".

A desert dweller [who are usually nomads or from remote desert villages and are simple people accustomed to bearing hardships in their lives and livelihoods and generally not aware of mannerisms that city people are accustomed to] came to Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) and asked, "O Messenger of God! When will the Day of Judgment come?" The Prophet asked him back, "What preparations have you done for the Day of Judgment?" He replied, "I have neither done a lot of prayers, nor have I fasted a lot, but I love God and His Messenger!" Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

اَلْمَرْءُ مَعَ مَنْ أَحَبَّ

"You will be with the ones you love".

Anas (May God be pleased with him) [who narrated this] said that he had never seen the prophetic companions happier before than that day upon hearing this [as they had immense love for God and His Messenger and knowing that they will be with them forever in the eternal life, subject to God's acceptance of them, was a source of immense joy for them]. (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Anas [May God be pleased with him])

Abu Bakr (May God be pleased with him) said, "The pleasure that lovers of God get, prevents them from seeking the world (worldliness) and makes them unattached to all human beings". Abu Suleiman al-Darani (May God have mercy upon him) said, "There

are some people among God's creations who are not prevented from God by the Paradise and its blessings, so how can they be prevented from Him by the world?" Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) passed by three people whose bodies were weak and looked pale. He asked them, "What has caused this condition of yours?" They replied, "Because of the fear of the punishment of Hell!" He replied, "God will surely protect those from it who fear it!" He then proceeded along the way and saw three more people who were weaker and paler than the first three and asked them, "What has caused this condition of yours?" They replied, "Desire and longing for Paradise has caused this!" He said, "God will surely grant the thing that you are so profoundly desirous of!" He then proceeded further along the way and saw three more people who were even more weak and pale compared to all previous ones he met. He asked them, "What has caused this condition of yours?" They replied, "We love God! [And in that love, we have become oblivious to everything else.]" He said, "You are the ones who are the intimates of God! You are the ones who are the intimates of God!"

Harem ibn Hayyan (May God have mercy upon him) said, "When a believer recognizes one's Lord, loves Him and when one loves Him, one gets focused on and attentive to Him, and when one finds sweetness of that focus and attention, one does not even glance at the world with desire nor does one glance passingly at the Hereafter. Such a one lives in this world with the body, and with one's soul in the Hereafter [in the Divine Presence]". Yahya bin Mu'adh (May God have mercy upon him) said, "God's forgiveness (*'Ufu*) encompasses all sins, what would be the state of His acceptance? His acceptance (*Rida*) encompasses all hope, what would be the state of His love? His love (*Hub*) makes one oblivious to the intellect and consciousness, what would be the state of His loving affection? His loving affection (*Muwadda*), makes one forget everything other than God, what would be the state of His compassionate gentleness (*Lutf*)?" Yahya bin Mu'adh (May God have mercy upon him) said, "In my opinion, a particle of God's love is better than seventy years of worship that is devoid of [Divine] love". Now we will explain the reality of love as there is some complexity in its meaning.

Reality of Love, its Causes and the Meaning of God's Love for His Servant

This topic will not be clear and understandable until it is explained as to what the reality of love is, what are its causes and conditions, and what is the meaning of love for a servant of God. Firstly, we will explain some basic matters.

Reality of Love: First thing is that love cannot even be imagined until there is deep understanding and perception, because a human being can only love something that one is able to perceive, that's why, this quality is not found in inanimate objects because they neither have perception nor understanding, instead it is a quality (inherent characteristic) of one who is a living perceptive being. After that, perceptions are either favorable and suitable to the temperament of the perceptive being (person or individual) and give one pleasure or they are in opposition to it (temperament) and harm it as they neither affect the perceptive being in terms of pleasure nor in terms of harm. In this way, perceptions are of three types: those that are in accordance with the temperament

of the perceptive being and are pleasurable to one who loves them; those that are disliked by the perceptive being who is pained by them or abhors them; and those perceptions that neither cause pleasure nor pain, they are neither beloved nor abhorred. In summary, things that are pleasurable for one, are beloved to one. The meaning of something being beloved to one is that the [human] temperament inclines towards it, and the meaning of something being abhorred by one is that the [human] temperament abhors or dislikes it. In other words, love is the inclination of the [human] temperament towards the thing that one finds pleasure or delight with. If this inclination becomes firm and intense then it is called intense love (*Ishq*). Similarly, abhorrence [or disliking or repulsion] is that the temperament becomes disgusted with the thing that causes one pain. When this hate intensifies, it becomes repulsion.

Perceptions of the Senses and Love: Second thing is that when love becomes subservient to perception and understanding then its division will be done in the same manner as it is done for perception and senses. It is because for every sense, there is a perception of a specific thing from among the things that are perceived (for example, the sense of sight that resides in eye, perceives the shapes and forms of objects). Every sense finds pleasure and delight from some perceptions [that are peculiar to it and favorable to it], and this pleasure causes the temperament to incline towards it, and for a healthy temperament, those perceptions are beloved. For example, the delight and pleasure of eye is in those perceptions that are perceived by the eye such as beautiful things and beautiful faces. The delight and pleasure of ear is in those perceptions that are perceived by the ear such as melodious songs and refreshing sounds.

The delight and pleasure of nose is in perceptions that are perceived through nose such as pleasant smells. Similarly, the delight of taste [perceived by the tongue] is in foods and the delight of touch is in soft and smooth things because these things that are perceived, provide pleasure to the senses and that's why, they are considered beloved, and a healthy temperament has inclination towards them. As far as the delights and pleasures of the five senses are concerned, animals partake in them too along with human beings. Hence, if a person restricts love to the perceptions of the five senses and says that God is not perceived with the five senses and that's why, it's impossible to love God. In this case, the peculiarity (specialness) of human being that we are supposing (assuming), will become wrong and the sixth sense [that human beings have besides five outer senses] will become useless on whose basis, human being has distinction and superiority over animals, and that [the sixth sense] can be construed (resembled or compared) as intellect, [inner] light, heart, or some other word like that. However, it will be incorrect to say that [it is impossible to love God because God is not perceived with five senses] because the inner insight [and illumination] is more powerful and mightier than the outer understanding. Compared to eye, heart perceives more and the perception of the beauty of meanings that is done by means of intellect, is far greater than the [perception of the] beauty of outer forms that is perceived by the eye. Therefore, the perception of the heart about sacred Divine matters will provide complete pleasure and delight that are excluded from the circle (boundaries or limits) of perception of the five senses, and the healthy temperament and correct intellect will

incline more strongly towards them, and the very meaning of love is that the heart is inclined towards the thing whose perception is pleasurable and delightful. We will soon provide details of this. The upshot of this is that only that person can deny the love of God who is at the level of animals and is incapable of rising above the perception of the [five external] senses.

Reasons of Love: Third thing is that a human being loves one's lower self (*Nafs*) and sometimes loves another [person or thing] for the sake of one's lower self. Now the question arises: is it possible that one loves another for the sake of the being (*Dhat*) of another without doing it for the sake of one's own lower self? As far as the [spiritually] weak are concerned, they respond to this question in negative. For them, it is not possible that a human being could love another only for the being of another and this love has nothing to do with one's own being (i.e., loving another without wanting anything back in return). Truth of the matter is that such love is both possible and present. That's why, we will explain here the reasons (causes) of love and their types.

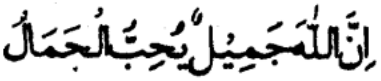
It should be known that for every living [person], one's first beloved is one's own self and one's own being. The love of self means that one's temperament is inclined towards the perpetuity of one's own existence and towards the revulsion of one's non-existence and death. By nature, only that thing is beloved that is suitable for the lover, and what can be more favorable to the self than its perpetual existence, and what can be more unfavorable than one's own non-existence and death? That's why, human being loves life and hates death. The main reason for this hate is that no one agrees to one's own demise and considers death as bad. However, if one faces tremendous hardships in life and endures sufferings, then one may be fine with the end of sufferings with death but it is not because one finds death endearing, instead it is because one wants the end of one's sufferings and hardships. To summarize, human being by innate nature, hates death and non-existence, and loves the permanence of existence. Just like perpetual existence is beloved, similarly perfection of existence is also beloved because [one who is] imperfect does not have perfection, and even loss is like non-existence compared to perfection. Non-existence, whether it is of [inner] qualities or existence, is deserving of one's hate. Just like perpetuity of existence is beloved, similarly, existence of the quality of perfection is also beloved. This is inherent in the nature that God has endowed in the inner human disposition. The way of God does not change.

The upshot of this is that the first beloved of a human being is one's own being, then the safety of one's bodily organs, wealth, offspring, family, and relatives is beloved. The safety of organs is beloved because the perfection and permanence of existence is dependent on them, wealth is beloved because it is an instrument of the permanence of existence. All other things can be deduced as such. One loves one's child, although one gets no benefit out of that and one has to endure hardships in that, because the child will take one's place after death, and one's succeeding generations will continue after one is gone, and it is tantamount to the continuation of one's own existence, and one finds one's perpetual existence in that. Same is the case of one's extended family and relatives because one loves them due to the perfection of one's own self, because

one thinks of one's self as strong because of them, and their perfection is a source of pride for one. Wealth, relations, external factors are like the human arms that complete a human being. Hence, the existence, perfection and permanence of existence is beloved to one and everything opposite to that are disliked as repulsive. This is the **first reason of love** [which is the perfection and perpetuity of one's own existence].

Second reason of love is favor. Human being loves favors or good done to one and it has been [Divinely] entered in one's innate nature to love those who do favors on one. One who loves someone because of the favors granted to one, does not love the being of the benefactor, rather, one loves the favor. Favor is an act of the benefactor, if it does not stay then love would not stay either, although the being of benefactor stays, as if the abundance or paucity of love is dependent on abundance or paucity of favors.

Third reason of love is to love something because of its being and not because of any benefit or profit that is about to arrive from its being, rather, its very being is the profit. This is the real and eternal love and it can be said with confidence that this love is going to stay forever, and not because of any benefit or profit that is about to arrive from its being, instead its very being is the profit. This is the real and eternal love and it can be said with certitude that this love is going to stay forever. All healthy temperaments derive pleasure from beautiful flowers, pictures, brightly colored birds with beautiful sounds, etc. Many people enjoy looking at these things. Nevertheless, all these things are delightful and pleasurable, and every such thing is a beloved. The perception of every beauty is pleasurable. If it is proven that God is beautiful then He will be beloved to every person to whom His Majesty and Beauty has been revealed. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:



"God is beautiful and loves beauty". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Abdullah ibn Mas'ud [May God be pleased with him])

Fourth reason of love is beauty. Beauty is also an important reason of love. But what is beauty? It is important to explain that. Those people who keep an eye on the outer [appearance] and are prisoners of feelings and perceptions, think that beauty is that a human being has balanced organs, good facial features, reddish and light complexion, and good height. Generally, such people are termed as beautiful because these are the characteristics that they see with their eyes. That's why, they have this conjecture that something that cannot be seen with the eye, not get encompassed by the thought, and is devoid of good complexion and features, is not beautiful and does not even reach the level of likeness or desirability, even though this is a wrong thought. Beauty is not dependent on things that can be seen with the eye or on the balance of physical composition or on the light reddish complexion. We say this writing is beautiful, this sound is beautiful, this horse is good, rather we go to the extent of saying this cloth is beautiful and this utensil is beautiful. What is the meaning of the beauty of voice, writing and all other things? If beauty is present only in face, although we know well that the eye finds pleasure in a beautiful writing [like calligraphy], ear finds pleasure in beautiful

songs, all the perceptions in the world are either good or bad, so what is the meaning of beauty which is common in all things? We will shed some light on this.

The beauty of everything is in the matter that the perfection that is suitable or possible for it, gets accumulated in it. If all of its possible perfections get accumulated in a thing, then it deserves to be called beautiful, and if some perfections are there and some are not there then that thing will be beautiful to the extent of the perfections it has [that are peculiar to it]. As an example, not every horse can be called beautiful, instead only that horse will be called beautiful that has all the characteristics that are necessary for a good horse - appearance, composition, color, speed, beauty of its response to the reins, etc. Beautiful writing is that in which all perfections related to writing are accumulated such as the balance of letters and words, flow, arrangement, beauty of organization, etc. Everything has a perfection that is peculiar to it and is not peculiar to something else, rather the absence of that perfection in another thing is termed beauty for the other thing. It is learned from this that the beauty of everything is in the perfection that is peculiar to it. That's why, the perfections on the basis of which a horse is termed as good will not be the same on the basis of which a human being is termed as good, and the characteristics on the basis of which a writing is called good, will not be the same for calling a horse as good. All matters can be deduced on the basis of this principle.

Here you can say that the things that have just been mentioned are not just perceived by eye but also by some other senses like voice (perceived through ears) and taste that are related to other senses, proving that beauty is related to senses and feelings, however, the perception of those things that cannot be perceived by any of the [five] senses, does not make sense. The answer to that is that the beauty is not dependent only on perception of the senses and feelings, rather, things that cannot be felt or perceived by senses have beauty in them. As an example, it is said that this character trait is good, this knowledge is good, this quality is good, these mannerisms are good. Beautiful character traits refer to knowledge, modesty, bravery, God-fear, kindness, thoughtfulness, consideration, and other good character traits, inner dispositions, and temperaments. None of these are perceived by the five senses, instead they are perceived by the light or illumination of the inner insight (*Baseerah*). All these beautiful character traits are beloved and the one who possesses them is also beloved to someone who is familiar with these character traits. The proof of this is that it has been placed in the human temperaments that they will love their prophets and prophetic companions [and other righteous people with exalted character traits], even though they have never even seen them [or even know how they looked like].

Some people love their religious leaders [from the past history] intensely, and spend all of their wealth in defending them, and do everything they can to refute the people who criticize them, even though they have never seen them before and if they were to see them, they may not even like their looks. It is then learned from this that one has not loved them because of their outer appearance and looks, but rather, intensely loved them by witnessing their inner appearance (i.e., their knowledge, understanding, exalted character traits, closeness with God, etc.). Their outer forms have become dust after mingling with the dust [in their graves], one still loves them and is devoted to them

because of their inner character traits and qualities such as their faith, God-fear, expansiveness of knowledge, familiarity with subtleties of the religion, struggle to spread the knowledge of the Divine path. All these matters are beautiful, and all these qualities are excellent. The perception of their beauty only happens by the light of the inner insight as senses are incapable of perceiving them. Such is the state of the people who love Abu Bakr al-Siddiq (May God be pleased with him). One who loves him does not love his bones, flesh, skin, organs, form and appearance because these things have become extinct or transformed [into something else] but those [non-physical and immaterial] things have remained due to which Abu Bakr al-Siddiq (May God be pleased with him) reached the rank of closeness, proximity, intimacy and Gnosis of God (*Ma'rifa* or *Siddiqiah*), in other words, his noble character traits and beautiful inner qualities. Love for him is due to these very qualities, although the outer form has become extinct.

The origin and reason for all of these beautiful inner character traits is knowledge and ability (*Qudrah*), in other words, these noble people attained the knowledge of the reality of matters and became capable of adorning their selves with beautiful inner qualities, temperaments and dispositions after controlling the lusts and desires from the lower self. All other inner qualities emanate from this very knowledge and ability, and these two are not perceived by any outer sense and they do not have any outer shape, form and color that could be revealed to the eye and as a result of that considered as beloved. The upshot of this is that beauty is present in inner character and habits. If knowledge and ability had not been the fountainhead of the beautiful inner character, then this matter would not have been the reason for love. It is proven from this that the real beloved is the expression of beautiful inner character which is called praiseworthy character traits and beautiful qualities, and the source of them are knowledge and ability. This expression is beloved to the human nature, although it is not perceived by the [outer] senses. That's why, when people hear the stories of the generosity of Hatim al-Tai and bravery of Khalid bin Waleed (May God be pleased with him), they uncontrollably and imperceptibly start to love them, although Hatim's generosity is not perceived by the eye nor is the quality of bravery of Khalid seen by the eye, and this love is neither born by seeing their outer appearance nor does it happen because of any expected profit from them that could reach people who love them. It is proven from this it is not necessary for love, that the beloved does any favor on the lover, rather a beloved is loved due to the being of the beloved (because of the way the beloved is and not for anything else), even though no favor of beloved reaches the lover. The being of beloved is beloved because every beauty is beloved. Forms are of two types - outer and inner. Outer form or appearance is seen by the eye and inner form is perceived by the inner insight (*Baseerah*). One who is devoid of inner insight neither perceives it (the inner beauty) nor does one derive any pleasure or delight from it, or loves it or gets inclined towards it. One whose inner insight is stronger than the outer senses, prefers inner meanings over outer meanings and considers them beloved. There is a tremendous difference between two individuals where one of them loves a drawing on a wall due to its outer beauty and the other one loves a prophet due to his inner beauty.

Fifth reason of love is a secret suitability (compatibility) that exists between a lover and a beloved. Sometimes it happens that a strong connection or relationship develops between two human beings not because of beauty or some other benefit but because of the compatibility of their souls. We have shed light on this on the Book of Affection and Brotherhood (al-*Ulfa wa al-Akhuwwa*) [in the fifth book of the second volume or quarter of Ghazali's *magnum opus* "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God" which is not included in this treatise].

The summary of this [entire explanation of the reasons of love] is that there are five reasons of love. First is that a human being loves the existence and permanence of one's self and perfection. Second is to love those who do favors on one and help one in one's existence and perpetuity and [help] resist ignorance in one. Third is to love someone who has not done any favors, but others have benefited from. Fourth is to love someone who, in one's own existence, is beautiful, whether it is in outer appearance or in inner appearance or form or meaning. Fifth is to love someone with whom one has a secret compatibility. If all of these five reasons [of love] get accumulated in one person, then the love of that person will be complete and will be at a very high level. If someone's child is beautiful, well mannered, knowledgeable, wise, treats people well, serves one well and is obedient then the parent has immense love for that child, then this love will be stronger and wider to the extent these character traits are perfected in one. Now we will explain that the perfection and accumulation of all these [five] reasons [of love] is only possible in the Being of God and, in reality, He is the One deserving of love.

God is the Only One Deserving of Love

If one is not inclined towards God but is inclined towards other than God, it is a proof of one's lack of understanding and of remoteness from Divine Gnosis. In reality, for people of deep inner insight, there is no one deserving of love other than God and no one else is eligible to be called a beloved. This claim is not without proof and we will prove it in upcoming pages that the combination of all five reasons of love is only possible in the Being of God. It is not possible in anyone besides, as anyone other than God has, at the most, one or two reasons [of love] and that too in allegorical sense, rather in the sense of one's [mere] conjecture and thought. On the other hand, the accumulation and combination of all of these [five] reasons in God, is real. When we will explain this matter in full details, it will become clear to people of insight that the thought of the foolish and imbecile that love of God is impossible, is not correct. Instead, the matter is contrary to it, that no one should be loved other than God. Now we will examine each one of these [five reasons of love] separately [to prove that all these five reasons for loving someone, only apply to God alone and none besides].

First Reason: First reason that has been explained is that human being considers one's self as beloved and desires its permanence, perpetual existence, and perfection. One hates destruction, non-existence, fault, and impediments of perfection. These things are found in the inherent nature of a living human being. One who knows one's

self (*Nafs*) and recognizes one's Lord, knows this very well that one's existence is not on its own, instead the existence of one's being, permanence, perfection, and everything depends on God and is due to Him. He is the creator of one's existence, He is the One who keeps one's existence, He is the One who creates qualities of perfection [in one] and completes them, He is the One who creates means that take one to perfection, He is the One who creates guidance that guides one for using these means, otherwise a servant's (human being's) existence is nothing - it is mere non-existence. If God does not create one by His action, and after creating, if He does not grant His Grace, one will get destroyed, and if He does not complete it (His Grace), one will remain deficient. Upshot of this is that there is no existence in the world that exists by its own being. Every existence exists by [the Being of] this Living, Self-Subsisting (God) whose own existence is by His own Being. If a knower of God ('*Arif* or Gnostic) would have love for one's own being, one would also have love for that Being on whom one's own being is dependent on and is benefiting from and got existence from, provided one considers Him as the creator, present, evolver [of all creations and existences], keeper [of all creations and existences] and existent by His own Being. If one does not have love for such Being, it will be said that one neither knows one's self nor one's Lord. Love is the fruit (outcome) of knowing [God] or Divine Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*). When there is no love, there will be no Gnosis, and to the extent this Gnosis is weak, to that extent love will be weak, and to the extent Gnosis will be strong, to that extent love will be strong. How is it possible that an individual has love for one's self but not for one's Lord? One who endures the hardship of sun, also loves the shade, and one who loves the shade, also loves the trees due to which the shade is established and has existence. Every present (existing) thing's relationship with God's ability is like that of shade with the trees. Existence of shade is by means of the trees, and the existence of light is by means of the sun. In other words, shade is subservient to trees for its existence, and the existence of light is subservient to the sun. Similarly, the existence of everything that is present, is subservient to that One Being. All things are examples of His ability and creativity.

If it is necessary for human being to love one's self, it is also necessary to love that Being by whom one received existence, then in one's reality, inner qualities, inner and outer beings, and inner meanings and physical composition, one received permanence [in the form of eternal life that begins after this life]. However, this love can only be experienced by someone who knows the above-mentioned realities as they have been explained. One whose heart is indulged in lusts of the lower self, is oblivious to one's Creator and Lord, and does not have the love of God [in one's heart], and only keeps an eye on lusts and outer appearances, in other words, remains a prisoner in the realm of the visible world (material realm) in which one has no distinction. Rather, animals partake in that too. Only that person can be in the angelic realm (*'Alam al-Malakoot*) who has resemblance with the angels. One who is in the realm of animals and descends low in this realm, to that extent one will be distanced from the angelic realm.

Second Reason: Second reason of love is to love someone who does one favors, helps one with money, helps one is every matter, be ready to help at all times, protects one from enemies, protects one from the evils of those who are jealous, helps in all

objectives related to the self, offspring, family and relatives. Such a one is usually a beloved. This reason [of love] also demands that no one should be loved other than God. If understanding of God's right is developed correctly, it will be clear that the one who does favors is only Him. As far as God's favors on His servants are concerned, they cannot be encompassed in writing. These favors are innumerable as God Himself said:

وَإِن تَعُدُّوا۟ نِعْمَتَ ٱللَّهِ لَا تُحْصُوهَآ ۗ

"If you start counting God's blessings, they cannot even be brought into counting [as they are innumerable and uncountable]." (Qur'an, Chapter 14, Verse 34)

In every matter, God's favors are such that they cannot even be counted. Servants [of God, i.e., human beings] can only be referred to in terms of favors [they do on others] in allegorical sense. Real benefactor is God alone. Suppose someone has given you all of one's treasures and granted you complete prerogative to spend. If you started to think that someone has done you a tremendous favor by handing you over the treasures and giving you prerogative to spend, then this would be wrong thinking. First, you should deliberate on four matters, then the reality of favor will become clear to you.

First is the existence of the person who is giving you the treasure. Secondly, the presence of wealth with one. Thirdly, having full control over it. Fourthly, the idea in the heart of handing the wealth over to you. Now we ask you, "Who created that person? Who gave one the wealth then granted control and ability over it? Who put the intention in one's heart to choose you for handing over the wealth? Who put your love in one's heart? How did one get the idea that one's own betterment and well-being in this world and the next is in doing you a favor? One is bound to obey the insistence of one's heart to give you the wealth or property and cannot oppose that, what is the reason for that?" If you deliberate on it, you will get the answer to all of these questions, and it will become lucidly clear that the real benefactor is God alone who compelled one to do favor on you, and subjugated [one's heart] for you and have imposed the factors that prompt one to do favor upon you. The hand of the person doing favors is merely a means by which God's favors are delivered to His servants. In that matter, one is compelled like a water channel compelled to let the water flow. If you consider the intermediary as your benefactor and start to have gratitude for him or her then it is an indication that you are unfamiliar with the reality.

Whenever a human being does a favor [on others], one does it on one's own self, doing it on any creation [of God] is not possible. Although one adopts the form of favor, one searches for its compensation from before, whether it is in the world, such as the world gets conquered for one or becomes subservient to one and profusely praise one, stories of one's generosity spread far and wide, and people start to shower one with flowers of their obedience and love, or one attains maximum possible rewards from God (Divine recompense) in the Hereafter. Just as no one puts one's wealth in the river for no reason, similarly, one does not put one's wealth in another hand without any [ulterior] motive (objective). That motive is one's objective. If someone has given you wealth then you are not one's objective, rather, you are just a means of the attainment of one's

objective, whether this objective is one's mentioning, reputation, fame, honor, greatness in this world, or the honor, greatness and Divine recompense in the Hereafter. This person [who has done favor on you] has completed one's objective by handing you over one's wealth. That's why, one is not your benefactor, instead, one is a benefactor of one's own self (*Nafs*). One wants to get something in return for the wealth, that one thinks is better than it. If it had not been better, one would not have spent one's wealth on you. Come to think of it, one is not deserving of your gratitude or love and there are two reasons for that. One reason is that after the imposition of factors from God that prompted one to do favor, one was compelled to give you that wealth [or property or material possession] and was incapable of opposing it. The parable of this is of a treasurer of a king whom king commands to grant one with a royal reward. One who receives that reward cannot consider the treasurer as one's benefactor because after getting that royal commandment, the treasurer was compelled to comply with and was incapable of opposing it. If king were to defer the matter of the reward on the will of the treasurer, then the treasurer would not have given it. Similarly, if God were to leave the benefactor to one's own will, one will not agree to spending even a counterfeit coin [on you], but He first instilled in one's heart the reasons and incentives for giving out one's wealth, then created the thought in one's heart that one's this-worldly and other-worldly benefits for giving out wealth, hinge on this giving and that's why one gives it out. Second reason is that one gives out wealth and takes in return that which in one's opinion, is better than the wealth. One's example in this case is of a trader or businessperson and a trader cannot be a benefactor because one is taking the compensation for giving out wealth. It is a separate matter that one accepted as a compensation either praise or Divine recompense [instead of taking a monetary or material recompense]. It is not necessary for a compensation that it should be felt [or seen], rather the pleasures and benefits can take the place of wealth [as compensations] and sometimes become the best recompense for the wealth.

In reality, favor is something that one does not take any recompense for, in other words, the giver gives in such a way that the giver does not derive any pleasure in it or attain any benefit from it, and it is impossible for this type of favor to come into existence in a human being. Only God is the source and grantor of this type of favor and the [innumerable] favors that God has done on His creations, there are no secret benefits for God in them, all benefits are attained by the creations. It is clear from this detail that to use the word favor for other than God is either a lie or just an allegorical reference. The existence of favor in other than God is impossible, just like darkness and brightness are impossible to combine. God is unique and alone in this Divine attribute (quality) of His, like all of His other attributes. It is learned from this that a knower of God ('*Arif* or Gnostic) should love God instead of an apparent benefactor who is not even capable of doing any real favor. The real benefactor is God alone and He is the only One deserving of this love [which is based on one's favor]. If a person considering other than God as a benefactor, loves the favor of such a one then it is one's ignorance and a proof of one's unfamiliarity with the meaning and purport of favor.

Third Reason: Is that the human being loves a benefactor even though that favor is not on one but on someone else. These things are found in human temperaments. For

example, if you are told about a leader who does justice, is well aware [of the problems of the people one is responsible for], treats people with kindness and generosity, deals with them with humility, even though that leader is thousands of miles away from you [in a different part of the world in another country] but you start to love this leader in your heart. On the other hand, you hear about a leader who is known for oppression, who is arrogant, evil, trouble maker, and is a leader of the farthest country from you, then you hate this leader despite the distance and remoteness from you. Your heart has different feelings for these two leaders and this difference is quite prominent; you have extreme inclination towards one and extreme hate for the other. This state of love and hate is when you are deprived of the largesse of one leader and safe from the oppression of the other and apparently there is no possibility for you to go there where that just leader or unjust leader rules. But your love for the just leader is merely for the reason that this leader is a benefactor, not because you have benefited from any favor. This reason also necessitates that you love God, rather do not love anyone other than Him, except when you have a reason for having a connection with other than God. It is because the doer of favors on all the creations and granter of Divine largesse out of the grace and largesse is Him alone and none besides. First, He granted them the wealth of existence, then granted them organs and completed His favors by granting them the means that are necessary for them. Furthermore, He granted them the means of comfort and ease that do not come in the circle (sphere) of needs but there is a trace of need in them, then He granted more favors that are not counted as needs. The example of necessary things in human body are heart, liver, and head, needed organs are eyes, feet and hands, and extra things for beautification include arched eyebrows, lips, cheeks, almond shaped eyes, etc. These are things that if they are not present, there is no impact on human needs or necessities as these things are related to beautification [of human appearance] only. Among non-bodily things, the example of necessary things are water and food, needed things include medicines, meat, and fruits, and extra things include the greenery and beauty of trees, beauty of flowers and flower buds, tastes of foods and fruits. These are the [extra] things, if not present then they do not fulfil any needs or necessities. These three types of [Divine] blessings that are necessary and needed, and extra [beautifying] things are present in every living creature. Rather, they are present in all creations from the particle on the earth to the loftiness of the Divine Throne. That's why, only God is the benefactor and none besides Him can be a benefactor. If a human being is a benefactor, then that favor is a good thing from among the good things of God's creations. He is the One who is the Creator of beauty, He is One who is the Creator of the benefactor, and He is the Creator of the means of favors. In this regard, loving other than God is mere ignorance and foolishness. One who knows this does not love anyone other than God.

Fourth Reason: Is that one loves a thing just because it is beautiful and there is no other purpose [of love] other than [its inherent] beauty. As mentioned before, it is inherent in innate human nature. Beauty has been classified into two types: first is the beauty that is perceived with the eye, and second is that beauty that necessarily requires the illumination of the inner insight. First type of beauty is perceived even by a child, rather, it is perceived by even an animal or bird, but the second type of beauty is perceived only by those who are apt to be called "people of the heart". Those other

people do not share this title with them who only look at the outer aspects of the worldly life and do not see anything other than the visible. Beauty is beloved to everyone who perceives it. Those who perceive beauty from their hearts, they consider beauty as beloved from their hearts. The example of this is the love of the prophets and of true scholars (saints and Gnostics) for their high (sublime) character traits and beautiful qualities. Their love is in the hearts, although their faces and outer appearances are hidden from the eyes. This is what is meant by the beauty of the inner form that is not perceived by senses, however, one does perceive the signs that point to their high character. When hearts are convinced of that, then hearts are inclined towards them and love them. Hence, when one sees the writing of an author, or poetry of a poet, or a picture of an artist, or a builder's construction, the inner qualities of that author, poet, artist and builder get revealed to them who caused these works to come into existence. The crux of their works is their knowledge and ability. Then to the extent of the greatness, beauty, and superiority of what is known about them, to that extent their knowledge will be superior and complete. Such is the state of the person with the ability. To the extent of the high honor and status of the being with ability, to that extent the ability will be superior and complete. Because among the knowns, the highest and the greatest known is of the Being of God. That's why, the knowledge associated with the highest Being (God) will be the highest and greatest of all knowledges which is the knowledge of God's Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*). Then rank by rank, those things possess honor and superiority that are peculiar to God's Gnosis or are closer to it. To the extent a thing is closely connected to God's Gnosis, to that extent it will have the greatness, honor, and distinction.

The beautiful character traits, inner qualities, dispositions, and temperaments of Gnostics is composed of three things. Firstly, these people have the knowledge of God, angels, revealed [Divine] books, and the Divine laws. Secondly, they have the ability to reform and purify the selves of themselves and other servants of God and to reform and guide them spiritually. Thirdly, they have been purified of evils, inner faults, and lusts that dissuade human beings from the paths of goodness and righteousness and [instead] force them to tread the paths of evil. Due to these [three] matters, people love the prophets, their successors, scholars [of the Divine path], and just and generous leaders.

Knowledge, Ability, and Purity: Now let's look into these three matters in connection with the Divine attributes (qualities). The state of knowledge is such that all knowledges [collectively known by humanity] of all the people who came before and are here now and will come in the future, have no comparison with God's knowledge. His knowledge encompasses each and every thing that exists, and nothing is outside His all-encompassing knowledge. God says:

لَا يَعْزُبُ عَنْهُ مِثْقَالُ ذَرَّةٍ فِي ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَلَا فِي ٱلْأَرْضِ

"Not even a particle is absent from Him [and His knowledge] from the heavens and the earth." (Qur'an, Chapter 34, Verse 3)

In one verse, the entire creation has been addressed:

وَمَآ أُوتِيتُم مِّنَ ٱلْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

"And you have been given the knowledge, but it is very little." (Qur'an, Chapter 17, Verse 85)

Instead, even if all the denizens of the heavens and the earth unite to encompass His knowledge on how an ant or a mosquito was created, they will not be able to reach even a tiny fraction of His knowledge and will only attain the amount of knowledge that He desires them to achieve. Whatever little knowledge that creations have is due to His education. Qur'an says:

خَلَقَ ٱلْإِنسَـٰنَ ﴿٣﴾
عَلَّمَهُ ٱلْبَيَانَ ﴿٤﴾

"He created the human being and taught the speak (eloquence, ability to explain oneself, articulation of complex and subtle matters, and learning from others' speak and articulation)." (Qur'an, Chapter 55, Verses 3-4)

Upshot of this is that if the beauty and distinction of knowledge is beloved or it is an adornment and perfection for the one who is adorned with it in its own right, then in that respect, a human being should only love God. The knowledges of scholars compared to His knowledge, are mere ignorance. God's knowledge has unimaginable superiority over the combined knowledge of all the creations because His knowledge has no limits while the knowledge of the creations is limited and has an ending point.

Ability (*Qudrah* or having power, strength, means, know-how to accomplish something or to bring it into existence) is also an attribute of perfection and compared to that, inability is a shortcoming or fault. Every perfection, greatness, distinction, and superiority is beloved and one finds pleasure in its perception. That's why, when one hears about the bravery and distinction of Ali (May God be pleased with him) and Khalid (May God be pleased with him) over their contemporaries then sentiments of happiness stir one's heart. One gets so happy just to hear about their brave adventures then what would have been their happiness if one had witnessed [first-hand] their adventures with one's own eyes? Now compare the abilities and bravery of God's servants with that of God. Take the person from among the creations who is the most powerful, possesses the widest dominion and power, possesses the greatest ability of all people to eradicate all the evils from the lower self, possesses the deepest insights into matters related to the selves (hidden matters related to the soul) of oneself and others, and possesses the complete ability to control them. Take this person and then see that such a one, despite having tremendous strength, power, wide-ranging control, and abilities, has no control over [preventing] one's own death, life, resurrection after death, profit, or loss to the extent that such a one is not even capable of preventing the loss of one's eyesight, hearing of the ears, speech of the tongue, and illnesses of the body. There are innumerable matters in which a human being is unable to do anything for oneself and for others in matters that are related to one's abilities. And matters that are not related to one's abilities, one is unable to do a thing equal to the size of a fly's wing. Then the

ability one has on one's own self and on others, it is neither one's own doing nor does it exist by oneself, instead, as God created one, similarly, God created one's ability and its means and made one capable of doing things related to one's abilities. It is impossible that one would love someone from among the servants of God because of the ability, politics, domination, governance and perfection of power but not love God, although the power and might is only appropriate for God who is the most dominant and greatest of all. He is the Overpowering, the All-Prevailing, the All-Encompassing of all knowledge, and the Possessor of all abilities. Heaven is wrapped up in His right hand, whatever is there that is on or underneath the earth is in His control, and the reins of all creations are in His hand. If He destroys all creations that exist on earth, not an iota or particle will diminish from His dominion. Among His servants, whoever has ability or strength, all that is from the signs of His Supreme ability and power. To Him belongs the beauty, majesty, greatness, domination, supremacy, and superiority. That's why, if it is possible to consider someone as beloved because of one's abilities, then the only One deserving of this love is the Possessor of all abilities, God, the Exalted.

The refinement and purification of the lower self (*Nafs*) from all blemishes, shortcomings and evils is an attribute (quality) that compels one to love [the possessor of it]. This is also beauty and is related to the inner form. Although all prophets and Gnostics were above the faults, sins and evils, the sanctity and perfection of purification is possible only for that One Being who is Pure and Possessor of majesty, grandeur, and honor. All other creations have some faults, rather most of the creations seem to be the embodiment of faults and shortcomings, rather, the very fact that they are creations, incapable [of so many things], subjugated [by Divine power], and being needy, are in themselves faults and shortcomings. Hence, perfection is reserved only for God. If anyone other than God has any perfection, it is also an endowment of Him. It is not within the purview of a human being to reach the apex of perfection because the lowest degree of having the apex of perfection is that a servant [of God] is no longer subjugated [by the Divine power] and is no longer dependent [on God] for one's own existence and no one has this attribute besides God, rather, the attainment of this attribute by [anyone] other than God is impossible. He is the sole bearer of this distinction with perfection, He is the One who is devoid of all faults, He is the One who is purified of all evils. If sanctity and purification from all faults is also considered beauty and perfection and this attribute being a cause of love, then in reality this attribute is solely exclusive to God alone. If [anyone] other than God has received a share in this attribute, then it is termed as perfection only compared to other [creations].

Fifth Reason: Fifth reason of love is compatibility and resemblance because something [or someone] that resembles another, is inclined towards it. Hence you see that a child is inclined towards a child, a grown-up towards a grown-up, and every animal towards its own kind and it runs away from another kind. Every person of knowledge is inclined towards a person with similar background in knowledge, and carpenter towards another carpenter as opposed to a farmer. This is such a reality that does not require the establishment of proof, but experience and observation is its clear proof. It shows that compatibility is an important cause of love. However, compatibility is sometimes on the outward and sometimes in a hidden matter that one is not

necessarily aware of, such as two people uniting over a matter by chance, although they have neither seen each other nor do they have greed for each other's wealth as Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

اَلْاَرْوَاحُ جُنُوْدٌ مُجَنَّدَةٌ فَمَا تَعَارَفَ مِنْهَا إِئْتَلَفَ وَمَا تَنَا كَرَ مِنْهَا إِخْتَلَفَ

"Souls are a combined army (group). Those among them who know each other [in the realm of souls before coming into this world], they get together [and get along well in this world also]. Those who were strangers [before in the realm of souls], remain separate from each other [and do not combine, meet or get together in this world in the material realm because they do not have compatibility at the spiritual plain]".

In this tradition, "familiar" refers to "compatibility" and "strangers" refers to "incompatibility". Nevertheless, compatibility is also an important reason of love between a servant [of God, i.e., a human being] and God. This compatibility is not outward so they both have the same face and appearance, instead, both have an inner compatibility among them. This compatibility is sometimes in matters that can be written in books and sometimes in matters that are impossible to write and record in books so that they remain hidden behind the veil of Divine jealousy (*Ghairah*) [in order to protect Divine secrets from those who are unworthy of them due to their own low spiritual ambitions, missteps in the spiritual path, and not having the correct intention and high resolve to forge ahead in the high spiritual path into the Divine Presence] and their concealment is correct so that when the travelers on the path of Gnosis reach their destination, these secrets are unveiled to them by themselves [by the Divine Grace]. Those matters in which there is compatibility between God and human beings and that can be written in books, refer to those inner character traits and attributes in which a servant is close to God that one has been commanded to follow, as it is stated in a prophetic tradition of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) who said:

تَخَلَّقُوْا بِاَخْلَاقِ اللّٰهِ

"Adorn yourselves with the character of God (i.e., become truly Godly)".

In other words, such beautiful character traits, inner temperaments and dispositions should be adopted that are among the Divine qualities such as righteousness, knowledge, being good to others and having compassion for them, generosity, kindness, good advice, showing others the path of guidance, stopping them from evil, all of these are the injunctions of the Divine law. One draws near to God by attaining them. This nearness is not the nearness of place and body, instead this nearness is of inner qualities and attributes that God is adorned with. Matters that are not allowed to be written in books have been alluded to by God in the following verse:

وَيَسْـَٔلُونَكَ عَنِ ٱلرُّوحِ ۖ قُلِ ٱلرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّى

"They ask you concerning the soul. Tell them that soul is from the command of my Lord." (Qur'an, Chapter 17, Verse 85)

It has been said in this verse that soul is a Divine matter and is beyond the human intellect. (For a masterful explanation of this verse and other related matters, please refer to Chapter 1 of this book "Explanation of the Mysteries of the Soul"). It is because of the soul, angels were commanded to bow down to Adam (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) as stated in Qur'an:

إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاكَ خَلِيفَةً فِي ٱلْأَرْضِ

"We have made you (human beings) [God's] vicegerent on earth." (Qur'an, Chapter 38, Verse 26)

Hence, human being became deserving of God's vicegerency because of this compatibility. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) alluded to this matter in his saying:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَلَقَ آدَمَ عَلَى صُوْرَتِهِ

"God created Adam [and all human beings by extension, as Adam (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) is the father of the entire humanity] in His own image".

On the basis of this tradition, some with low intellect have thought that form (or image) only refers to the outer form which is perceived by the senses. Due to this conjecture of theirs, they have [wrongfully] imagined body and organs for God and have compared Him to other things [perceived by the senses]. May God protect us in His refuge from this lack of intellect and may He guide them. This compatibility [between human beings and God] have been alluded to in this tradition of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him). God told Prophet Moses (Peace and blessings of God be upon him), "I was sick, but you did not visit Me!" Moses replied, "How could I have visited You [and how could You even be sick in the first place]?" God said, "My so-and-so servant was sick, and you did not visit him. If you had visited him, you would have found Me near him". However, this compatibility appears when a human being [first] performs the obligatory acts of [Divine] worship and after them, performs supererogatory (optional) acts of worship [by excelling in the deeds and path of righteousness that draw one closer to God]. In a *Hadith Qudsi* (a prophetic narration that has been attributed to God for its source), Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) stated [that God said]:

لَا يَزَالُ الْعَبْدُ يَتَقَرَّبُ إِلَيَّ بِالنَّوَافِلِ حَتَّى أُحِبَّهُ فَإِذَا أَحْبَبْتُهُ كُنْتُ سَمْعَهُ الَّذِي
يَسْمَعُ بِهِ وَبَصَرَهُ الَّذِي يُبْصِرُ بِهِ وَلِسَانَهُ الَّذِي يَنْطِقُ بِهِ

"My servant draws near to Me by supererogatory (optional, extra, above and beyond what is required in terms of Divine obligations) acts [of worship, devotion and service] until I love one. When I start to love one, I become one's hearing with which one hears, I become one's eye with which one sees, I become one's tongue with which one speaks (i.e., Divine help, succor and nearness gets included in all facets of one's life as a result of striving in the Divine path with utmost sincerity and single-mindedness)". (This tradition has been narrated in *Hadith* collection *Sahih Bukhari* on the authority of Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him])

The summary of this explanation is that compatibility is the most important reason of love from among its reasons. Although, this is a good and strong reason, its existence is scarce. If we deliberate, we see that all these five reasons [of love or loving someone] are in fact combined in God alone and not in the allegorical and metaphorical sense or by means of allusion. All these reasons are combined at a very high level in God because in the sight of the people of inner insight, only reasonable and acceptable love is of God alone while in the sight of people who are short-sighted, the real love is the love of other than God.

It is also worth considering that there can be sharing in the love of creations because you may love someone because of some specific reason and another person is a co-sharer in that love due to the same reason and hence, you love another person as well. Co-sharing in love is a type of fault and is a proof of digression of the beloved from [the level of] perfection. It is also possible that your beloved is unique in some quality and apparently no one else shares that quality present in the beloved. If such a person is there, it is still possible that a co-sharer [in that quality] exists and you are not even aware of it or it is impossible for such a quality to exist in another one in the future. However, all the attributes and qualities of God are at the highest level and rank and no one is a co-sharer in these attributes of Divine Majesty and Beauty - no such person is present now nor is there any possibility that one like that will exist in the future. It is learned from this that there can be no sharing in His love and that's why, He is devoid of any faults, just like there can be no co-sharing in His lofty attributes. Hence, God is the only one deserving of real love and of the perfection of love and this [Divine] right is such that no one is a co-sharer in that.

Divine Gnosis and the Pleasure of the Divine Vision

Under this title, we will explain that the highest level of pleasure is Divine Gnosis and the vision of the Divine Countenance, and that it is not possible to prefer this pleasure over any other. This preference [of preferring worldly pleasures over the pleasure of Divine Gnosis and Divine Vision,] can only be given by someone who is deprived of this [supreme] pleasure.

Human Temperaments and their Pleasures: It should be known that all pleasures are subservient to the perceptions and to many forces and temperaments that are accumulated in the human being. For every force and temperament, there is a separate pleasure. The meaning of this pleasure is that every disposition or temperament achieves its objective for which it has been created. Human temperaments have not been created for no reason, instead, every temperament has been formed for a matter that is its objective. For example, the temperament of anger has been created for being satisfied and for revenge; no doubt, its pleasure is in finding domination or exacting revenge. This revenge and satisfaction are its objective. The temperament of desire to eat has been created to acquire food and with that, finding continuation of [physical]

existence; no doubt, its pleasure is in the food that is its objective. Same is the state of the temperaments of listening, seeing, and smelling. Every temperament finds pleasure in attaining its objective. There is not a single temperament that does not find pleasure from [attaining] its objective. Similarly, heart has a temperament which is called the Divine illumination. This temperament is also termed as inner insight, light of faith, and certitude. However, terminologies can be different, but the meanings are important. Nevertheless, the heart, due to an attribute of its, by means of which it perceives meanings (reality of matters), possesses a separate status from all other bodily organs. These meanings are neither imaginative nor can they be felt. For example, the creation of the universe and its need towards a Creator who is Eternal and Wise, who is adorned with Divine attributes. This temperament is also called intellect on the condition that no one should think of intellect in terms of the force or ability used in methods related to debates and argumentations because generally people use intellect in these meanings. In reality, intellect is the quality that distinguishes human being from animals and by its means, one perceives Divine Gnosis. It is clearly evident that it is an excellent quality.

Temperament of the Heart: This temperament has been created so that the realities of all matters can be perceived by its means. The objective of this temperament [that it seeks and gets satisfied with] is knowledge (*'Ilm*) and Divine Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*) and its pleasure lies in that, just like other temperaments' pleasures are in things that are their objectives. As far as the pleasure of knowledge and Divine Gnosis is concerned, no one can refute it. It happens that if someone attains the understanding or knowledge of something insignificant, one is pleased with it, and one who remains unfamiliar with a matter, even though it may be insignificant, remains sad. People express pride in [attaining] understanding of insignificant things and their tongues express everything they know. It is because they derive great pleasure in that knowledge and consider that as a perfection of their being. Knowledge is the greatest attribute from among the attributes of Divine Lordship (*Rububiyah*) and is the pinnacle of perfection. Hence, when a person is praised due to the knowledge, one is extremely pleased with that because in this way, one gets to hear about the perfection of one's being and perfection of one's knowledge, one takes pride in that and finds pleasure therein.

The amount of pleasure that one gets in the knowledge of statecraft (administration of a country) and political strategies, one does not get that level of pleasure in knowledge of agriculture and planting. Similarly, the amount of pleasure one gets from the knowledge of God's Being and Attributes, angels, and of the secrets of the heavens and the earth, same level of pleasure is not attained from the knowledge of grammar and poetry. The fact of the matter in this regard is that the pleasure of knowledge is commensurate with its honor and excellence [in terms of what it is related to]. The honor of knowledge is recognized from the honor of its subject matter. In knowledges and understandings, the most superior understanding or knowledge is the one that gives the most amount of pleasure and their honor depends on the honor of the subject matter [of that knowledge and understanding]. We don't know of anything or anyone in the world more honorable, superior, lofty, and dignified than God who is the creator of everything, He is the one who completed them [into a final form], granted them beauty, brought them (humans) into existence once then causes their extinction then will resurrect them, He is the

planner and composer of everything. Is it possible that there could be a court other than the Divine court that is all encompassing of all the heights of dominion, beauty, perfection, and majesty? It is neither possible to imagine the causes of Divine majesty nor is it possible to encompass the wonders of the states. The tongues of those who praise, are silent and pens seem tired (incapable of writing about the Divine wonders). If you have doubts about this truth then you should not have doubts in the matter that the knowledge of the secrets of Divine Lordship and the organization of Divine matters that encompasses all existences, is the most superior, most pleasurable, and most pure of all understandings. If one attains this knowledge, then one has the well-justified right to consider one's being as endowed with excellence and perfection and be delighted with it and be proud of it. It is thus known from this that knowledge is pleasurable and the most pleasurable of all knowledges is the knowledge of God's Being, attributes, actions, and of the wisdom and administration of the immense fathomless dominion that is spread between the earth and the Divine Throne. The pleasure of Gnosis [that has a miniscule share in that knowledge] is the greatest of all pleasures - it is the most effective, firm, and durable pleasure compared to all other pleasures of lusts, anger, and other senses.

Reality is that one who does not recognize God in the worldly existence, will not be able to see Him in the Hereafter. One who does not derive pleasure in God's Gnosis in the worldly life, will not be able to enjoy the [pleasure of] Divine vision in the Hereafter. It is because if one cannot take something with oneself from the worldly life [in terms of spiritual endeavors, strivings, and consequent attainment of Divine Gnosis], there will not be anything new there [in the Hereafter]. Until one has sown, how will one reap [the harvest]? Every person will be resurrected [on the Day of Judgment] on the same [spiritual] state [or the lack of it] that one died on and one will die on the state that one has lived one's life on. Hence, to the extent one has the reliance (provision) of Divine Gnosis, to that extent one will find pleasure, and the same Gnosis will culminate in the Divine vision that will multiply the pleasure manifold. It is just like the pleasure of a lover that multiplies manifold upon seeing the beloved. Firstly, one was immersed in a thought and was finding pleasure in that, then all of a sudden the face of the beloved comes in front of one, the pleasure one will find now will multiply manifold times, rather it will not be wrong to say that this vision is the culmination of pleasure. The state of Paradise is such that anyone who enters it, will have all the blessings one desires, but one who desires meeting with God only, will not find pleasure in anything else. In summary, one will attain the blessings of Paradise to the extent one's heart is illumined with the love of God and love is commensurate with Divine Gnosis. It means that the real [cause of] eternal happiness and everlasting success (*Sa'adah*) is God's Gnosis. Divine law has construed it as faith (*Iman*) [but faith actually refers to Gnosis].

Means of Perfecting Love of God: The happiest and the most prosperous person in the Hereafter will be the one who is firmest in love of God. It is because the meaning of Hereafter is to come to God and have the honor of meeting with Him. What could be a greater blessing for a lover to come to the Beloved after long desire for the meeting and perpetually attain the felicity of the vision [of the Beloved] in such a state that there are no obstacles, nothing to ruin the joy, no enemy, no envier, no opponent, and no fear of

getting this vision severed. But this blessing will be proportional to the force (intensity) of love. To the extent of love will be the extent of pleasure. A servant [of God, i.e., human being] benefits from Divine love in the worldly life because some level of God's understanding is in the heart of every believer as no person of faith is devoid of some love. However, what is termed as "intense love" (*Ishq*), is not present in every individual, rather it is not present in [overwhelming] majority of people. This pinnacle of [Divine] love is attained by two means:

First Means - Severing Worldly Attachments and Entanglements: First means is that a servant breaks one's relationship from worldly attachments and entanglements and takes the love of other than God, out of one's heart. Heart is like a container - there is no capacity of putting vinegar in it as long as the water filling it up is not removed. It should not be expected that the love of God [in the heart] can co-exist with worldly attachments. It is because, God has not created two hearts in the chest of a human being. Perfection of love is that one loves God with the depths of one's heart. Until one remains inclined to other than God, a part of the heart will remain indulged with that other than God. To the extent one is indulged with other than God, to that extent love will be deficient. Cleansing the heart of all evils and emptying it of all types of loves has been Divinely commanded.

The attestation [of Divine Unity and Oneness] لَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا اللّٰهُ (There is no god but God) means the same thing that there is none worthy of worship except God, nor is there any Beloved other than God because the one who is beloved is the one who happens to be the god (or lord) because the meaning of servant (or slave) is that one is being imprisoned and lord is the one in whose imprisonment the lover is. Every lover is a prisoner of one's beloved. That's why God said:

أَرَءَيْتَ مَنِ ٱتَّخَذَ إِلَٰهَهُۥ هَوَىٰهُ

"Have you seen the one who has made a god out of one's desires [from the lower self and is running after them]?" (Qur'an, Chapter 25, Verse 43)

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

أَبْغَضُ إِلٰهٍ عُبِدَ فِي الْأَرْضِ الْهَوَى

"The worst god that is worshipped on earth is desires from the lower self [as it is the root cause of all evils, troubles, sufferings, strife, and turmoil on earth]".

In another tradition, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

مَنْ قَالَ لَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا اللّٰهُ مُخْلِصًا دَخَلَ الْجَنَّةَ

"One who says, 'There is no god but God (لَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا اللّٰهُ)' with sincerity, will enter the Paradise".

The meaning of sincerity is that a servant devotes one's heart to God alone and no room is left in the heart for other than God, God [alone] becomes one's Deity worthy of worship, He becomes the Beloved of one's heart, and He becomes the objective of one's heart. For one who is in that state, world (worldliness, worldly attachments, and entanglements) is no less than a prison because it is an obstacle between one and the vision of the Beloved. Imagine a person who has just one beloved, and one has been intensely desirous of meeting with one's beloved for a long time, and has been anxiously waiting for the vision of the beloved, however, the walls and iron grills of the prison have been the impediments in one's way. Suddenly, one gets liberated from the prison. What would be the intensity of one's happiness then? The [very] thought of living with one's beloved forever and ever would be so soothing and refreshing [in that state of freedom and liberation]!

Nevertheless, the strength of the love of the world (worldliness and worldly attachments) is an important reason of weakness of the love of God. Love of the world includes love of spouse, children, relatives, land, animals, gardens, entertainments, etc. Such an individual is imprisoned in the love of the world and is inclined towards its blessings and due to that, one endures a loss in the love of God. As much as one has longing for the world, there will be a lessening in the longing for God. To the extent one gets a share in the world, to that extent one's share in the Hereafter diminishes, just like one gets distanced from the east as much as one gets closer to the west. World and the Hereafter are like the east and the west. People of the heart (spirituality) have witnessed this with their eyes that in order to eradicate the love of worldliness from the heart, it is imperative to adopt the path of abstinence (*Zuhd*) [from worldliness], to have perseverance (*Istiqama*) in patience, and to have Divine obedience with fear and hope. In previous chapters, we have explained the [spiritual] stations of repentance, patience, abstinence, fear [of God], and hope [in God]. Striving towards attaining these stations is one of the two means of attaining Divine love and that means is to empty out the heart of anything or anyone other than God. It (i.e., the inner transformation) starts with having faith in God, Day of Judgment, and Heaven and Hell that engenders fear and hope. After that, repentance [on wrongdoings] and patience [on adversities faced in treading the path of righteousness and spiritual strivings] are born. Gradually the state of the heart is transformed so that there does not remain even the slightest inclination towards wealth, material possessions, and worldly pleasures, rather, it becomes purified of all evils and turbidity, the purified lamps of Divine love get illuminated in the heart creating the capacity in it for Divine Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*) and Divine love (*Mahabba*). Spiritual stations like repentance and patience are the initial facilitating agents of heart's purification. This purification is one of the two means of Divine love.

Second Means – Firming up Divine Gnosis: Firming up [or strengthening] Divine Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*) and spreading it well in the heart is the second means of strengthening the love of God in the heart. It becomes possible when heart is cleansed of all worldly attachments and engagements. Its parable is of removing weeds from a land before sowing seeds in it. This is the second element of [Divine] love. When this seed [of Divine Gnosis in the form of spiritual strivings in the path to God after purifying the heart of all impurities and evils] has been sown and is taken care of [in terms of constant

watering, removal of weeds that crop up, and protecting it from weather damages], then the sapling of love and Divine Gnosis comes out of that gradually, and it continuously grows into a big strong [and firmly rooted] tree, and it is termed as the noble statement of purity (*Kalima Tayyiba*) [entrenching firmly into the heart]. Qur'an has stated this as a parable:

ضَرَبَ ٱللَّهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَفَرْعُهَا فِى ٱلسَّمَآءِ

"God narrates the parable of the noble statement of purity that it is like a noble tree with firm and deep roots and its branches are going up high in the sky." (Qur'an, Chapter 14, Verse 24)

This noble statement is further alluded to in Qur'an as:

إِلَيْهِ يَصْعَدُ ٱلْكَلِمُ ٱلطَّيِّبُ وَٱلْعَمَلُ ٱلصَّـٰلِحُ يَرْفَعُهُۥ

"The good statements reach Him, and good righteous deeds make them rise up to Him [into the Divine Presence]. (Here we learn the secret and wisdom of striving and excelling in righteous deeds as they ascend into the Divine Presence, elevating the spiritual ranks and degrees of their doer, culminating in Divine Gnosis and attainment of real purpose of life and ensuing eternal happiness and everlasting success)." (Qur'an, Chapter 35, Verse 10)

The "noble statement of purity" is a reference to Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*) and good righteous deeds are like its conduits and servants. Hearts are purified by means of good righteous deeds and this inner purity and limpidity results in the attainment of eternal life. If good righteous deeds come to a halt, then purity of the heart will also come to an end. The purpose of good righteous deeds [that include spiritual strivings in the Divine path] is this Gnosis, and knowledge is to know the nature of these deeds. It means that knowledge is the first and the foremost [in the attainment of Divine Gnosis]. First knowledge is the knowledge of external matters (exoteric knowledge or "*Ilm Mu'amla*") and its purpose is actions and deeds. By means of this knowledge, the heart is cleaned of all evils and impurities so that it becomes capable of receiving the illumination of truth and then gets adorned with the knowledge of Divine Gnosis. Another name for knowledge of Divine Gnosis is "spiritually unveiled knowledge" (*'Ilm al-Mukashafa*) and this is the second knowledge [needed for spiritual illumination that leads one into the Divine Presence].

When one attains knowledge of Divine Gnosis, one necessarily attains [Divine] love [in which God loves one and one loves God]. It is just like a person of moderate temperament who upon seeing a beautiful thing, gets inclined towards it and finds pleasure in that [indulgence]. Pleasure is naturally subservient to love and love is subservient to Gnosis. A servant [of God] can only reach this Gnosis when one severs one's relationship with worldly engagements (entanglements and attachments) and this severance of relationship is not possible without limpidity of thought, perpetuity of Divine remembrance, and continuous contemplation in God's Being, attributes, dominion and all of His creations [that are manifestations of Divine actions]. People who reach this

degree [of spiritual attainment and perfection] are of two types: those who are strong who first attain God's Gnosis and by means of God, they recognize and know everything else; and those who are weak whose Gnosis starts with [good righteous] deeds and actions and progressing from that they reach the Doer of everything.

For most people [who are of the second type], this method is easier. Qur'an, in many of its verses, has invited people to contemplation, deliberation, examination and derivation [of lessons from God's signs spread around everywhere] and has guided [humanity] to this method [of attaining the truth]. If you now say that both of these methods seem difficult to you and you would like to have an easier method explained to you then we will say that the first method in which by means of God, the understanding of creations is attained, is in reality difficult, subtle, and incomprehensible for the ordinary people (laymen). This only leaves us with the second way which is understood by the intellect of most people. If people [even] think of this [easier] way as difficult then it is not because this is really difficult [to fathom], instead, the real reason is that they do not even ponder and deliberate, and remain indulged in worldly lusts and carnal pleasures from the lower self. We cannot do a detailed discussion on this method because it is an extensive and fathomless topic and has many types (sub-branches) that cannot be counted because from the loftiness of heavens to the depths of the earth, there is no particle that does not argue about God's perfection of ability, completion of wisdom, apex of majesty, and pinnacle of greatness; these are uncountable particles and every particle has uncountable proofs for Him embedded in itself:

قُل لَّوۡ كَانَ ٱلۡبَحۡرُ مِدَادٗا لِّكَلِمَٰتِ رَبِّي لَنَفِدَ ٱلۡبَحۡرُ قَبۡلَ أَن تَنفَدَ كَلِمَٰتُ رَبِّي وَلَوۡ جِئۡنَا بِمِثۡلِهِۦ مَدَدٗا

"Say [O Muhammad! By way of teaching the humanity], 'If the ocean were to become ink for [writing] the words of my Lord, the ocean would be exhausted before the words of my Lord are exhausted, even if We brought the like of it as a supplement.'" (God alluding to the immensity of the fathomless ocean of esoteric spiritual knowledge and experience.) (Qur'an, Chapter 18, Verse 109)

Indulging in this [esoteric spiritual] knowledge is tantamount to diving into the ocean of "'*Ilm al-Mukashafa*" or knowledge of the spiritual unveilings and it will also not be appropriate to write it under the categorization of exoteric knowledge (*'Ilm al-Mu'amla*) in an unimportant way. However, it can be briefly explained with some parables.

Gnosis of the Creator by Means of Understanding of Divine Actions: In reality, from among the above-mentioned methods, the easier method is to attain God's Gnosis by means of the understanding of Divine actions. We should cast a glance at the Divine actions including those that are small compared to many of the other Divine actions but despite that, they are replete with wonders of God's ability (*Qudrah*). Earth and the creations that reside on it are very small and insignificant compared to angels and heavenly dominions. Just take the mass and size of earth, which apparently is vast, but sun that seems small to us, is thousands of times bigger than earth. On the one hand, see the vastness of sun and on the other hand see the expansiveness of universe that it is a part of. There is no comparison between the vastness of sun and the vastness of the universe. What we can see is the limits of the first heaven, and this heaven is quite

small compared to heavens above it. Then these seven heavens compared to the Divine Seat [of majesty, power, domination, dominion and sovereignty] (*Kursi*) are like a piece of iron placed in a vast desert, and the Divine Seat compared to the Divine Throne (*Arsh*) are like the seven heavens compared to the Divine Seat. Look into the vastness of the sun, universe, Divine Seat and Divine Throne and compare them with earth to see how small, insignificant, and lowly this earth is! Rather earth (land on earth) is very small compared to the oceans of the earth.

If human beings ponder over the Divine wonders, they will achieve the Gnosis which is easier to attain compared to the aforementioned methods. When Gnosis increases, [Divine] love also increases. If you wish to meet with God and have longing for it and would like to have the eternal felicity of the Divine vision then refrain from seeking worldliness (worldly pomp, glitter, attachments and entanglements), make Divine remembrance and contemplation compulsory upon yourself, it is possible that by means of incessant spiritual strivings, you will get a share in Divine Gnosis and love. Remember that leaving the worldly pleasures will get you the dominion that will be far expansive and eternal than you can imagine.

Reasons for Differences among People in Divine Love: All believers are co-sharers in the basic love [that emanates from the Being of God for all of His creations]. However, there are different degrees of love and these differences are there because people are different in their understanding and Gnosis and in love of the world. Differences between things are due to the [originating] causes behind those things. The cause of Divine love is Gnosis. If Gnosis is more or less, then there would certainly be an increase or paucity in love. Most people do not know more about God than what they have heard and memorized in terms of God's names (each name represents a Divine quality) and attributes, and due to lack of understanding, they imagine such [erroneous] meanings of them that God is far above them. Some people are not well-informed about the realities of these Divine names and attributes but they also do not imagine wrong meanings of them either, instead, they listen and accept as a matter of faith and get busy with actions [in terms of Divine worship] without getting involved in debates and arguments. These people are the people of the "right hand" [who have attained safety and eventual salvation]. Those who imagine wrong meanings are on the path of misguidance, and those who know the realities [of Divine names and attributes] are the intimates of God [and are foremost of the entire humanity in Divine proximity and Gnosis].

Since people understand matters from examples, we will first give an example to explain how people are different in the love of the same thing. If one thinks highly of an author due to an authored book and believes in author's excellence and perfection in writing, and another book of same author comes along that is even better than the first book, then certainly, one's love for the author will increase even more and one will become even more convinced of the excellence and perfection of the author. All knowledges and skills are in that state. One who possesses Gnosis and increases in that, one's love increases proportionally. On the other hand, there is an evil-doer (one who does not care about good things and is inclined towards bad things) who if listens

to it, listens only that such-and-such person is an author who has authored good books. Such an individual does not know what knowledges are hidden in those books and one's understanding [of the books by the author] is merely superficial and one's love is also minimal. A person of inner insight is not contented with mere listening, instead, one reads through the pages of the books of the author, searching for lustrous pearls of knowledge, by means of one's efforts, wants to get familiar with the wonders that are interspersed throughout these books, and when one succeeds in these efforts then one's love increases manifold because a creation or writing argues for the excellence and perfection of the creator and the author. Consider this now in the light of another example. This world is the creation and the authored book of God. An ordinary human being has this knowledge and belief, but it is merely superficial and cursory, while a person of inner insight wants to know its details, deliberates on them to the extent that one searches for wonders in insignificant things that baffle the intellects. This detailed study increases the Divine majesty, grandeur, and perfection of [Divine] attributes and in that respect, His love increases in the heart. Then as one's knowledge [of God] increases, to that extent one's Gnosis and love [of God] also increases.

The ocean of Divine wonders is a fathomless ocean without shores. Hence, it is not surprising if the bearers of this Gnosis are different in their love [of Him]. [The level of] Love is also different [in different people] due to the five reasons we have explained before. In other words, some people love God because He is the One who rewards them and grants them favors. Obviously, this love is not with the Being of God and hence it is weak, and the sign of weakness is that due to the changes in favors [they receive from God], their [level of] love also changes. Hence, the state of their love will be different at the time of adversity from the time of ease and comfort. One who loves God's Being or loves Him because He is deserving of it due to His perfection, beauty, jealousy (*Ghairah*) [in order to protect Divine secrets from those who are unworthy of them due to their own low spiritual ambitions, missteps in the spiritual path, and not having the correct intention and high resolve to forge ahead in the high spiritual path into the Divine Presence], and majesty and there is no difference (variation) in this love due to the variations in Divine favors. These are the reasons for differences in [the levels of] love [of God in different people], and there is no need to mention that the eternal happiness and everlasting success of the Hereafter will also vary due to the different levels of [Divine] love.

Longing for the Divine

Meaning of Longing for God: One should not deny the longing for God because longing is the needed [trait] when beloved is the objective. Under this topic, we would like to explain that a Gnostic certainly has longing for God, rather, one is compelled to have longing for God [the Beloved]. We will prove this claim in two ways: firstly, based on experience and observation and secondly, by means of traditions.

First Method by Means of Experience and Observation: We do not need to say much about this, rather, what we have written about love should be sufficient in this respect. If beloved has disappeared from the eyes, then having longing for the vision of the beloved is a natural matter. If beloved is present in front of one or one has attained to presence of the beloved, then longing is not there because longing is the name of seeking [the beloved] and the thing that has been attained is not sought. Thing that cannot be perceived cannot be longed for. Hence, if one has not seen an individual or heard about then it cannot be imagined that one will long for such a person. Perfection of perception is in the vision. If one's beloved is in one's constant vision, then one will not have longing for the beloved. We will explain it by means of an example.

If one's beloved disappears from one who constantly thinks about that, will long for completing one's thought by means of the vision of the beloved. However, if the thought of the beloved vanishes from one's heart and one forgets about it then longing does not even exist. It is also not plausible that one will start to have longing again for the beloved after seeing [the beloved] again because the meaning of longing is that one is seeking the completion of the thought in one's heart by means of the vision. Sometimes, one sees one's beloved in the dark and at that time, has this longing to complete one's vision by seeing the beloved in the light. It is also possible that one sees the face of the beloved but not the hair or other characteristics. In that case too, one can still have longing to see more beautiful characteristics of the beloved that was not seen before.

In God's case, both cases can be imagined, rather, a Gnostics necessarily longs for God for the two reasons. It is because the Divine matters that are revealed to people of Gnosis are seemingly clear and bright but in reality, they are very subtle and complex and it can be said about them that they were seen from behind a thin veil, so that some matters were left concealed and perfection of vision was not attained. Rather the vision has been admixed with imaginations causing turbidity and muddiness in the heart of the Gnostics. On top of that, if the worldly life [with all its problems and entanglements] casts its shadow on it, all the pleasure of this Gnosis dissipates. The perfection of clear vision will happen from a combination of vision (*Mushahada*) and the lightning bolt of spiritual illumination (*Tajalli*) and this is not possible before the Hereafter. The purpose of Gnostic is [to attain] Divine vision and the lightning bolt of spiritual illumination, hence it is necessary that heart has longing for it. In other words, one should have the longing for the completion of the thing (Gnosis) whose leading factors' understanding was attained by one in the worldly life.

This was the first necessary requirement for longing [for the Divine]. Now the second necessary requirement remains which is to have the longing for certain things after seeing certain other things which is also possible in the case of God. Divine matters are innumerable and there is no limit to them. Not all [Divine] matters are revealed to a servant [of God, i.e., human being], rather some matters are unveiled and some (many) are left as veiled [or concealed] due to their complexity and subtlety. A Gnostic knows about the existence of such matters and confesses that compared to what one knows, there are far more matters that one does not know about. Hence, one (Gnostic) has the

longing for bringing remaining matters to one's sphere of knowledge. As far as the first longing is concerned that one attains God's Gnosis with full clarity and illumination, will be attained with completion (complete fulfilment) in the Hereafter. In the meaning of the first longing termed as "vision", "meeting" or "seeing" [the Divine], it is not possible to have the completion of this longing in this world (worldly life).

The second necessary requirement for longing that one attains all the knowledge [about the object of one's longing], is neither possible in this life nor in the next, because the completion (complete fulfillment) of this longing is desired to be in the manner that the servant has all the matters unveiled to one related to the Divine beauty, magnificence, attributes, wisdom and actions that God knows about, but this is impossible. It is because God's knowledge is infinite. A servant would always know that there are many such matters remaining from God's beauty and magnificence that have not been unveiled to one. Hence one's longing will not be completed, especially the one who sees higher [spiritual] degrees from one's current [spiritual] vantage point and would be desirous of more [spiritual] degrees.

Second Method by Means of Tradition: The second method of affirmation of longing for the Divine is by means of the tradition. Many traditions are found regarding this. Hence, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) used to beseech God in his supplications:

اَللّٰهُمَّ اِنِّیْ اَسْاَلُکَ الرِّضَا بَعْدَ الْقَضَاءِ وَبَرْدَ الْعَیْشِ بَعْدَ الْمَوْتِ وَلَذَّةَ النَّظَرِ اِلٰی وَجْهِکَ الْکَرِیْمِ وَالشَّوْقَ اِلٰی لِقَائِکَ

"O God! I ask You for contentment with Your decision [in terms of what you send my way, whether it is ease or hardship], a life of comfort [in Your loving embrace] after death, the pleasure of gazing at Your Blessed Countenance, and longing for meeting with You".

Abu Darda (May God be pleased with him) asked Ka'ab Ahbar (May God be pleased with him) (both of them were distinguished companions of Prophet Muhammad [Peace and blessings of God be upon him] and Ka'ab Ahbar used to be a Jewish scholar of Torah and a Rabbi before becoming a prophetic companion) to narrate a verse of Torah. He said that God has said, "The pious have great longing for meeting with Me and I have great longing for meeting with them". Ka'ab Ahbar (May God be pleased with him) narrated another verse from Torah on the same subject, "One who is a seeker of Me will find Me and one who is a seeker of other than Me will find other than Me". Abu Darda (May God be pleased with him) said, "I bear witness that I have heard the same subjects from the tongue of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)". It has been narrated in the traditions of Prophet David (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) that God said to him, "O David! Convey my message to the people of the earth that I am the Beloved of the person who loves Me, I am the companion of the person who is My companion, I am the intimate of the one who is intimate of My remembrance, I am the friend of the person who becomes My friend, I like the person who likes Me, and I am subservient to the person who obeys Me. I know very well the state of the heart of the person who loves Me and I accept such a one for

Me and I love such a one with such love that no one from among My creations is preferred over such a one. O the people of the earth! Shred the veil of worldly arrogance and advance your step towards My wonders, companionship, being with Me, and have intimacy with Me, I will have intimacy with you and will be the foremost in loving you. I have created the inner disposition and temperament of my friends from the disposition and temperament of My friend Abraham, of Moses whom I spoke to, and of Muhammad whom I purified. I have created the hearts of those who have longing for Me from My light and have raised them up with My majesty".

One Gnostic said that God revealed to one of His friends, "Some of my servants are such that they love Me and I love them, they have longing for Me and I have longing for them, they remember Me and I remember them, and they look at Me and I look at them. If you walk on their path then I will love you and if you digress from their path, I will be displeased with you". He asked, "O God! What are their signs?" God said, "They watch the shade of the day like a compassionate shepherd watching over his goats (they safeguard all the moments of the day to draw closer to God and not let them get wasted in idle prattle or useless endeavors). They long for sunset like a bird longing for its nest in the evening [so they can devote their nights to God with pious devotions]. When night stretches its arms and darkness descends, beds are spread open, secrets are revealed, and lover reaches into the arms of the beloved, then they advance their steps for Me, prostrate their heads before Me, whisper to Me with My conversation (*Kalaam* or the Divinely revealed book), and entreat to Me by means of My rewards [both material and immaterial] to them. Some of them weep with screams, some weep silently, some create a loud uproar [in sorrow of separation from Me], some stand before Me complaining [for their remoteness to Me], some sitting, some standing, some bowing, and some prostrating. All of their complaints, entreaties and strivings have tremendous respect in My eyes. I will, first of all, give them three things: Firstly, I will put My illumination in their hearts so that they will give My news [to others] as I give their news [to the celestial beings]; secondly, if anything that is between them and the heavens and the earth come against them [in combat], I will consider it lowly for their sake [and will not allow anything to harm them in any way, shape or form]; thirdly, I will turn My Sacred Countenance towards them and you know what I want to grant them whom I turn My Countenance towards!"

God's Love for His Servant: In summary, God's love for His servant (i.e., a human being) is that He distances one from worldly entrapments and sins, purifies one's inner being from worldly impurities (evils, wrongs, shortcomings, and faults), and lifts the veil from one's heart to draw one closer to Him until the servant feels that one is witnessing God from one's heart. And servant's love for God is that one is inclined towards attaining the [inner spiritual] perfection that one is deprived of. It is obvious that the thing one is deprived of, one has longing for its attainment and one gets pleasure from it after attaining it. Now if you say that God's love for a servant is a doubtful matter and how does a servant knows that one is a beloved of God then its answer is that there are some signs of love that argue in its favor. Hence Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

إِذَا أَحَبَّ اللّٰهُ عَبْدًا اِبْتَلَاهُ فَإِذَا أَحَبَّهُ الْحُبَّ الْبَالِغَ اِقْتَنَاهُ

"When God loves a servant, He inflicts one [with hardships] and when He loves one intensely, He makes one special for Himself".

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) further said:

إِذَا أَحَبَّ اللّٰهُ عَبْدًا جَعَلَ لَهُ وَاعِظًا مِنْ نَفْسِهِ وَزَاجِرًا مِنْ قَلْبِهِ يَأْمُرُهُ وَيَنْهَاهُ

"When God loves a servant, He appoints an admonisher (advisor) in one's self and creates a stopper in one's heart [that stops one from wrongdoings]. They command one and stop one [from all wrongs and evils]". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Musnad al-Firdous* on the authority of Anas bin Malik [May God be pleased with him])

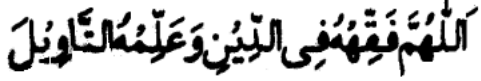
إِذَا أَرَادَ اللّٰهُ بِعَبْدٍ خَيْرًا بَصَّرَهُ بِعُيُوبِ نَفْسِهِ

"When God intends good [things] for a servant, He informs one of the faults in one's own lower self [to make one busy with removing them so that one can ascend to higher levels of spirituality with inner refinement and purification of the soul]". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Musnad al-Firdous* on the authority of Anas bin Malik [May God be pleased with him])

The most important and special sign from among all the signs is that the servant loves God, and from this very sign it could be understood what level of love God has for His servant. And the action that proves that a servant's beloved is God is that only God is the caretaker of all outer and inner, hidden and open matters of the servant, He is the One who advises [the servant], He is the One who infuses the way [of conducting one's life in the best possible manner in the mind of the servant], He is the One who adorns one with the ornaments of beautiful character and disposition, He is the One who makes one's organs busy with pious works, He is the One who keeps one's inner and outer beings on the right path, He is the One who focusses all of one's thoughts on a central point, He is the One who disinclines one from worldliness, He is the One who makes one disavow other than Him, He is the One who grants one the pleasure of entreaties to Him in solitude to make one accustomed to Him, and He is the One who lifts the veils between one and His Gnosis. These and other similar signs like these, argue for a servant's love for God.

Agreeing with God's Decisions, its Reality and Excellence: Agreeing with God's decisions (*Rida*) is a fruit (outcome) from the fruits of [Divine] love but the majority of people do not get its reality unveiled to them. The doubt and ambiguity that exists in its meaning, only those people are aware of it who have been Divinely bestowed with the knowledge of interpretation (*Taweel*) and understanding of the path to God (*Deen*). Some people deny agreeing with God (*Rida*) as they do not understand how one can agree on a matter that is against one's desire. They also say that if agreeing with every command, every decision, and everything is necessary because it is God's action then it is also necessary for a servant [of God] to agree with sins and disbelief (rejection of God). Some simple-minded people got deceived by this saying of the rejectors of agreeing with God's decisions and started to think that agreeing with sins and evils, and

not rejecting and objecting to disbelief and sin, is the [spiritual] station of accepting the Divine decree and agreeing with God's decisions. These [matters] are Divine secrets. If the secrets of the path to God get revealed by mere study of [Divine] commandments that pertain to outer human actions or get clarified by reciting [Qur'an], then Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) would not have prayed the following supplication for Abdullah bin Abbas (May God be pleased with him):



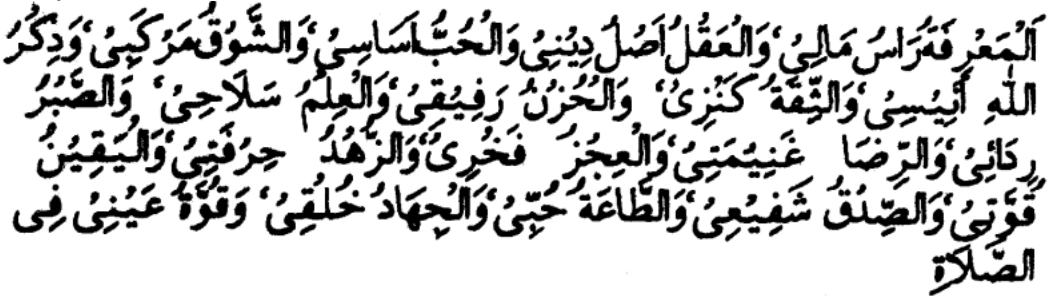
"O God! Grant him the understanding of your Path and the knowledge of interpretation (*Taweel*)!" (Narrated by *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim* and *Musnad Ahmed*)

Those who say that only patience is possible on matters that are against the desires or are hardships, and agreeing with God's decision is not possible [in unpleasant matters and hardships], are in fact denying the [Divine] love. When God's love has been proven [in the aforementioned] and it has also been clarified that a human being can be immersed in God's love with all of one's courage, then it also does not remain concealed that a lover is compelled [by an internal compulsion or driving force] to agree with every action and word of the Beloved. This agreeing happens in two ways: first is that one does not feel any sorrow or pain to the extent that even if one is inflicted with an injury or suffering, one does not feel the slightest bit of pain. Its parable is of a person whose heart is fully indulged in a matter and as a result of that, does not perceive anything else. Same is the state of a lover who is completely indulged in the love or the vision of the beloved, who endures torturous events due to one's submersion in this love. Then the lover does not realize any pain when its doer is anyone or anything other than the beloved. It can be guessed from this that if the beloved inflicts any pain to the being of the lover, then how can one realize that? Heart's indulgence in love is an important indulgence. When in ordinary love, one does not feel slight amount of pain, how can one feel major pain in major amount of love? Just like it is possible to have intensity of pain, intensity of love is also possible, and just like the beauty perceived by five senses is strong, similarly love is also strong that results from witnessing the inner beauty by means of inner insight. There is no comparison between the Divine beauty and majesty with any other beauty and majesty. One on whom a small portion of Divine beauty and majesty is revealed, loses senses and consciousness, and becomes so intoxicated with it that one becomes oblivious to all of one's conditions [including the pain and sufferings].

The second way of agreeing with the actions of the Beloved is that one perceives the pain and hardships, but one agrees to them [in terms of not complaining about them], rather one has the desire and intention for them. This is similar to the state of the person who endures the hardships of travels for the sake of attaining [business] profits and does not care about the hardships, because the expected profit is very endearing. Such is the state of the servants of God that when they are afflicted with any calamity from God, they have this certitude that the Divine recompense they will attain, has been stored for them [*in lieu of* it], hence they agree with the [Divinely ordained] calamity due to this certitude and are inclined towards it, rather they love it and have gratitude to God

for it. This happens in case one keeps in mind the Divine recompense, in return for the calamity. If one does not keep in mind the Divine recompense, rather the love is dominant to the extent that attaining Beloved's approval is one's sole objective, only He remains the sought and the beloved, and one does not have any desire for [Divine] recompense, rather one does not even think about it, then attaining Beloved's acceptance becomes one's sole objective and purpose.

Harem ibn Hibban (May God have mercy upon him) said, "When a believer knows and recognizes one's Lord, one loves Him and when one loves Him, one is focused towards Him, and when one finds pleasure in one's focus towards Him, one neither looks at the world with the eye of lust nor does one look at the Hereafter with the eye of laziness. Such a one lives in the world with one's body and one's soul is in the Hereafter [in the celestial and spiritual realm]". Ali (May God be pleased with him) narrated that he asked Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) about his way [of life] and he responded:



"[Divine] Gnosis is my capital (asset), intellect is the basis of my faith, [Divine] love is my foundation, longing [for God] is my riding mount (conveyance that carries me in my spiritual quest), God's remembrance is my intimate friend, firm-footedness [in the Divine path] is my treasure, sorrow is my companion, knowledge is my weapon [against ignorance and darkness of evil], patience is my shawl, humility is my pride, abstinence [from worldliness] is my occupation, certitude [in God and in eternal Divine verities] is my power, truthfulness is my intercessor, [Divine] obedience is my love, striving in the Divine path is my inner character and disposition, and the coolness of my eyes is in prayers [to God]".

Dhun Noon al-Misri (May God have mercy upon him) said, "The Being who created the armies of souls, made the souls of the Gnostics majestic and celestial, hence, they have longing for God, made the souls of the believers spiritual, hence, they are inclined towards the Heaven, and made the souls of the negligent (heedless of the real purpose of life and of the quest for eternal happiness and everlasting triumph) carnal, hence they are inclined towards the world (worldliness) [that immerses and submerges them in it that consumes them completely]". It is also said that longing [for the Divine] is a [sacred] fire of God that He alights in the hearts of His intimate friends (Gnostics, true sincere seekers of God) that burns down the intentions, thoughts, entrapments and needs [of other than Him] present in the hearts, and there is no existence (trace) of them left in their hearts. This is enough details on love, attachment, longing, and acceptance of the Divine and we will settle on this. And God alone is the enabler of all good and righteousness.

Chapter 17 – Inculcating Pure Intentions Devoid of Any Selfish Motives, Sincerity in all Matters, and Dedication to Truth

Pure intentions devoid of ulterior motives, seeking only God's pleasure, is a powerful factor in ensuring God's acceptance and help in getting things done right and is a source of immense benefits and blessings for all. Things done with ulterior selfish motives of worldly gains, seldom bear fruits and benefits intended therein. It's a Divine secret that will be best explained in ensuing exposition by Ghazali. Likewise, sincerity or doing things seeking only God's pleasure with no ulterior motives of any worldly gains – whether material or immaterial - propels one to ascendence in the spiritual path. Pure intentions and sincerity bring about Divine acceptance of deeds, blessings, and copious increase in the outcome, so that even small accomplishments can be a source of immense benefit and good on sustained long-term basis. Both (pure intentions and sincerity) are tremendous spiritual qualities that are stations of the spiritual path leading to Divine Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*) and consequent eternal happiness and endless success. Besides their profound implications to the spiritual path, those qualities imbue and unleash tremendous positive energies in one's life.

Devotion to truth (*Sidq*) in all matters, whether temporal or eternal, searching for it and living by it, is an essential quality of spiritual travelers, with great implications for one's worldly existence and dealings with fellow human beings. Ghazali's in-depth analysis of these sublime inner traits, is presented in condensed form as follows from the seventh chapter or book of the fourth volume of his *magnum opus* "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God" [23]:

Let it be known that by means of the inner insight of faith and illumination of the Qur'an, it has been revealed to the people of the heart that without knowledge and actions [according to the knowledge], the attainment of eternal happiness and everlasting success (*Sa'adah*) is impossible. It is because all people are on the verge of irrecoverable loss except for the people of knowledge, and all people of knowledge are on the verge of irrecoverable loss except for the people of actions [according to the knowledge], and all people of actions are on the verge of irrecoverable loss except for the people of sincerity [who act without any selfish, self-serving and nefarious ulterior motives, purely seeking the Divine Countenance], and all people of sincerity are in great danger [due to the entrapments of the lower self and Satan in the sublime spiritual path]. Action without intention is [merely] hardship, and intention without sincerity is

show-off, hypocrisy and sin, and sincerity without verification and investigation [of truth] is a deception of the sight. Hence, God has said the following in Qur'an for an action admixed with intention for other than God:

وَقَدِمْنَآ إِلَىٰ مَا عَمِلُوا۟ مِنْ عَمَلٍ فَجَعَلْنَٰهُ هَبَآءً مَّنثُورًا

"We will turn to the works they have done [in the worldly life] and will render them useless as if they are scattered dust." (Qur'an, Chapter 25, Verse 23)

We don't know how one can correct the intention who is not familiar with the reality of intention, and how can one be sincere who has corrected the intention but has no understanding of sincerity, and how can one demand truthfulness from one's lower self who does not know the meaning of truthfulness. Every servant [of God, i.e., human being] who wishes to obey and worship God has this first responsibility of acquiring knowledge of [having correct] intention, then attaining deep understanding of truthfulness and sincerity that is a cause of salvation and safety, and afterwards correct the intention by means of [sincere] action. We will discuss these three matters in three separate sections.

Excellence and Reality of Intention

Excellence of Intention: God says:

وَلَا تَطْرُدِ ٱلَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُم بِٱلْغَدَوٰةِ وَٱلْعَشِىِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُۥ

"Do not push away those [from your company] who call upon their Lord morning and evening seeking and desiring His Countenance (Divine proximity, intimacy and acceptance)." (Qur'an, Chapter 6, Verse 52)

In this verse, seeking and desiring refers to their [noble and resolute] intention. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَاتِ وَلِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مَا نَوَى فَمَنْ كَانَتْ هِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ فَهِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَمَنْ كَانَتْ هِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى دُنْيَا يُصِيبُهَا أَوْ امْرَأَةٍ يَنْكِحُهَا فَهِجْرَتُهُ إِلَى مَا هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِ

"Actions are dependent on intentions. Every individual will get the Divine recompense according to one's [true inner] intention [irrespective of the visible appearance of the action and its perceived goodness and nobility]. One who migrated for the sake of God and His Prophet [Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)] then one's migration is for God and His Prophet, and one who migrated for the sake of the world (worldly gains, profits, unseemly motives) or for marrying a lady, then one's emigration

is [in reality] for the thing towards which one has emigrated to". (Narrated by *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Umar [May God be pleased with him])

God has said in Qur'an:

إِن يُرِيدَآ إِصْلَٰحًا يُوَفِّقِ ٱللَّهُ بَيْنَهُمَآ

"If the two people [one from husband's and one from wife's side, who are trying to reconcile a husband and a wife after their disputes and differences that could potentially lead to a break up of their marriage] desire reformation [of the situation of the married couple and peaceful and amicable reconciliation between them with utmost sincerity], then God [by the blessings of noble and pious intentions of the two people who are trying to reconcile] will reconcile them (the husband and the wife) [by saving their marriage and getting them together again in peace, harmony, mutual love and respect]". (Qur'an, Chapter 4, Verse 35)

In this verse, the [purity and nobility of] intention has been termed as the cause of success [in attaining reconciliation by the Divine Grace]. In one tradition, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَى صُوَرِكُمْ وَأَمْوَالِكُمْ وَإِنَّمَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ وَأَعْمَالِكُمْ

"God does not look at your faces and wealth, rather He looks at your hearts and your actions [governed by the state of the hearts]". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him])

God looks at the heart because it is the seat of the intention. In a tradition narrated by Abdullah bin Umar (May God be pleased with him), Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said, "One whose intention is only the [seeking of the] world, God puts poverty in between one's two eyes and such a one separates from the world after getting more inclined towards it. One whose intention is the Hereafter, God creates richness in one's heart and collects one's wealth for one and such a one leaves the world as abstinent [from worldliness]". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Ibn Majah* on the authority of Zaid bin Aslam [May God be pleased with him])

Reality of Intention: It should be known that intention is such a state of the heart that is surrounded by two matters - knowledge and action. Knowledge comes first because it is the basis of this state [of the heart] and action comes after that because it is the fruit (outcome) of knowledge. The reason for that is every action - voluntary movement or stillness - reaches completion by three matters: knowledge, intention, and ability. It is because human being can neither have intention for a thing one does not even know about, nor can one do an action that one has no intention for. Thus, it is known from this that intention is necessary. Intention means having a movement in the heart for a matter that is suitable to one's state or material possessions. Human being has been created in such a way that some matters are suitable, and some are non-suitable [to human temperament and well-being]. Hence, it is necessary to be inclined towards attainment of those matters that are suitable and to get rid of matters that are in

opposition to or are unsuitable [to human well-being]. To differentiate between suitable and unsuitable, there is a need to have understanding of things [and matters]. Therefore, one cannot consume food that one does not see. That's why, God has created understanding and guidance and means for attaining them that are termed as outer and inner senses.

It is not enough though that one just knows about the food and is aware of its suitability or sees it with the eyes, rather, it is also necessary to have desire towards food, inclination of the lower self and lust for it should also be there. Hence, a sick person sees the food and knows that it is suitable for one but despite that, does not eat it because the power of the driving force [from within] is not there and heart lacks the desire [due to illness]. Then this desire and driving force [or lust] is also not enough, instead, sometimes, one sees the food and wants to eat it but is unable to due to some handicap [or incapacity or inability]. Hence, the ability and active organs have been [Divinely] created to complete the process of food consumption. Organs start to move because of the ability, and ability awaits the inner driving force which is subservient to knowledge and understanding or to opinion and belief. In other words, when it is known that a certain matter is suitable for one and it is necessary to do it and there is no opposition force present against it then intention is born, and inclination appears. When intention is there, ability moves the organs as if the ability is a servant of intention and intention is subservient to the command of belief and understanding. It is then proven from this detail that intention is the name of a middle trait and its crux is to have the inclination of the self towards matters that are in consonance with one's objective and towards the birth of inclination in the heart, whether these matters are suitable in the present or in the end (in future or in the afterlife). Here the first driving force is the objective being sought and it is what's termed as the "cause" or "driver" and this very objective is the intended purpose and the act of rising up is called "purpose" and "intention". When ability moves the organs to serve the intention, it is called "action". However, the ability to perform action is stirred up sometimes by one cause or driver, sometimes by two causes simultaneously, sometimes by two causes but one of the two causes is enough to stir the ability, sometimes one cause is enough [to stir the ability into action] but the second cause becomes its helper. In this manner, there are four types of intentions that are described as follows:

First Type - Pure Intention: First type [of intention] is that there is just one cause or driver [to actions]. For example, a wild beast attacks a person. Hence, when one sees it, rises all of a sudden. Here there is no driving force other than running away from the beast because one has seen the beast and considered it harmful to oneself. Therefore, upon seeing the beast, the incentive to escape is born in the heart and the desire (inclination) emerges. Because of this, the driver and desire have acted according to the ability. In this case, it will be said that this person's intention is solely to escape from the beast and there is no other intention in rising. Such intention is called "pure [intention]" and to act according to this intention is termed "sincerity". In other words, it is such an act that has no inclusion, participation, and combination of anything else [besides one single intention].

Second Type - Conjoining of Two Driving Forces or Causes: Second type [of intention] is that two driving forces or causes are conjoined, and both are active [causes] in their own rights and one cause is not dependent on the other. An example of this from the visible realm is that someone's needy relative asks one for help who fulfils the relative's need due to his or her poverty and close bond of kinship while knowing that if the requestor had not been poor, one would still have fulfilled the need because of kinship, or if the requestor had not been close [in terms of the ties of kinship], one would still have fulfilled the need due to the poverty [of the requestor]. At the same time, one has this certitude in the heart that even if a rich relative had asked one, one would certainly have helped and if a poor stranger had asked, one would not have refused to help. In this case, two drivers or causes have been conjoined by chance prompting one for action. Here one cause is the helper of the other, hence, we call it "conjoining of two driving forces".

Third Type - Partnership: Third type [of intention] is that none of the two causes or drivers alone can instigate an action. Instead, the combination of the two, stirs the ability [into action]. Its example in the visible realm is that two weak individuals help each other to lift a heavy thing which they could not have lifted individually with best effort. Another example is that someone's rich relative comes and asks for some money that one refuses to give. Then a poor stranger comes and asks for the same amount of money that one again refuses to give. Afterwards, a poor relative comes and asks for the same amount of money that one does not refuse as if one is stirred into action after the combination of two causes or driving forces - the ties of kinship and poverty. This type of intention is called partnership [of two or more driving forces or causes stirring one into action].

Fourth Type - Cooperation: Fourth type [of intention] is that if only one of the two causes or drivers is reliably there then it still becomes the instigator of action while the second cause is not dependable. However, if the second cause is conjoined with the first cause, it can certainly help and is effective in making it easier. Its example in the visible realm is that a weak individual helps a powerful person in lifting a heavy weight. If the powerful person had been alone, one could still have lifted it while the weak person is not able to lift it on one's own even though such a one is able to help the powerful person [to make it easier to lift]. Another example of this is that one has a routine to perform prayers and to give in charity and at that specific time some people come to visit, but one continues to perform the devotions as per the routine. If visitors had not come, even then, one would have carried out one's routine albeit with some heaviness on the temperament, but the arrival of visitors and looking at them created some ease and reduction [of the heavy feeling], consequently, that routine became lighter despite its toughness. Even though, one has this certitude that if the visitors had not come, one would still have carried out one's routine on time, and if one did not have this routine, one would not have carried out anything [in front of the visitors] for seeking fame [for one's piety]. We can call this type [of intention] "cooperation". The upshot of this division of the last three types (types second to fourth) is that the second driver or cause would be a companion or partner or helper.

The reason we are enumerating the types of intentions here is because actions are subservient to intentions and [actions] take their orders from them as narrated in the prophetic tradition, "actions are dependent on the intentions", as if actions are subservient to intentions, and there is no importance of the subservient (action), as status belongs to the commander (intention) [as the main driving force behind all actions, whether good or bad].

Acts of obedience [to God] are foods and nourishments for the hearts. The purpose of these nourishments is nothing except healing the hearts and that they find subsistence (*Baqa* or eternal existence) and safety of the Hereafter, and get endowed with the blessings and eternal happiness and everlasting success of meeting with God. Thus, the real purpose of meeting God is to attain the pleasure of eternal happiness and everlasting success (*Sa'adah*). Only the one who dies on the love and Gnosis of God has the honor of meeting with God. And only the one possessing Gnosis is capable of [truly] loving God and only the one who remembers God abundantly can attain attachment to God (*Uns*). Attachment [to God] is attained by means of perpetuity of Divine remembrance and Gnosis is attained by means of perpetuity of contemplation and love [of God]. Heart is not free to engage in perpetuity of Divine remembrance and contemplation until it is free of worldly engagements (entrapments), and it cannot become free of worldly engagements until the lusts of the lower self are severed from it, to the extent it becomes inclined towards good and righteousness and starts to have intention for it and becomes abhorrent towards evil.

From all good deeds and acts of obedience what is sought is the Hereafter, and from all evils what is sought is the world and not the Hereafter. Inclination of the self towards all good and divestment from all evils, frees the heart for Divine remembrance and contemplation. However, it attains permanence when there is persistence in performing good deeds and acts of obedience [to God], and [bodily] organs refrain from sins because there is a relationship between the organs and the heart. It is due of this relationship one impacts the other. The difference between the organs and the heart is that the heart assumes the role of the ruler and commander, and organs are like the subjects or servants and with their service and obedience, heart's qualities become firmly ingrained and solidified. To summarize, heart is the objective [as intention is born in the heart that is the main driving force] and organs are the instruments and with [both of] their means, one reaches the [intended] purpose.

Excellence, Reality and Degrees of Sincerity

Excellence of Sincerity: God says:

وَمَآ أُمِرُوٓاْ إِلَّا لِيَعۡبُدُواْ ٱللَّهَ مُخۡلِصِينَ

"They had been commanded to worship God in such a way that they keep sincerity in their path to God for Him alone." (Qur'an, Chapter 98, Verse 5)

أَلَا لِلَّهِ ٱلدِّينُ ٱلْخَالِصُ ۚ

"Remember, the worship and path to God is purely and sincerely for God alone [and nothing besides]." (Qur'an, Chapter 39, Verse 3)

فَمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا۟ لِقَآءَ رَبِّهِۦ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَٰلِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِۦٓ أَحَدًۢا

"One who hopes to meet with one's Lord, should continue to work righteous deeds [sincerely for the sake of God alone] and not attribute any partners to God in one's worship." (Qur'an, Chapter 18, Verse 110)

This verse was revealed for people who work [good righteous deeds] for God but [at the same time] they desire praise [appreciation, recognition and their ensuing worldly material benefits] from the people [that contravenes sincerity that has been Divinely commanded for their own benefit]. Hasan (May God have mercy upon him) mentioned this *Hadith Qudsi* (a prophetic narration that has been attributed to God for its source) from Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) who stated [that God said], "Sincerity (doing something purely for the sake of God without any ulterior material or worldly motives) is a secret from among My secrets. I impart it to the heart of that person from among My servants whom I love". (Also quoted by Imam Abul Qasim al-Qushairi in his book "*al-Risala Qushairiya*" from Ali ibn Abi Talib [May God be pleased with him])

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

مَا مِنْ عَبْدٍ يُخْلِصُ لِلّٰهِ الْعَمَلَ أَرْبَعِيْنَ يَوْمًا إِلَّا ظَهَرَتْ يَنَابِيْعُ الْحِكْمَةِ مِنْ قَلْبِهِ عَلٰى لِسَانِهِ

"A servant [of God] who purifies one's action purely for the sake of God for forty days, fountains of wisdom gush forth from one's heart to the tongue [as a result of this sincerity]". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Ibn 'Adi* on the authority of Abu Musa [May God be pleased with him])

It has been written in the traditions of Children of Israel that a worshipper was busy in God's worship for a long time. Once some people came to him and said, "Here there is a nation that worships a tree instead of God". The worshipper became angry on hearing this and took an axe and started walking towards the tree to cut it from its root. On his way, he came across an old man who was actually Satan in disguise who asked him, "Where are you heading to?" He said, "I want to cut this tree down". Satan replied, "What do you have to do with it? You left your worship and ended your [pious] engagement for no reason". Worshipper said, "This is also worship". Satan said, "I cannot allow you to cut this tree under any circumstances". Saying this, he started to wrestle with the worshipper who threw him on the ground and sat on his chest. Satan said, "Please let me go, I want to tell you something [that will benefit you if you let me go]". The worshipper stood up. Satan told him, "God has neither made it incumbent upon you to cut this tree nor is the responsibility of [guiding] this nation that worships this tree, on you! There are many prophets of God in the world, if He wants, He can

send any of his prophets to have this tree cut". The worshipper said, "I will surely cut this tree". When Satan saw that negotiation was not helpful, he announced the combat (fighting). Hence fighting started between the two again and worshipper defeated him again, flattened him to the ground and sat on his chest. When Satan saw that there is no way out, he said, "I want to tell you something that is much better for you". Worshipper asked him to tell him what he wanted to say. Satan asked worshipper to first get off his chest and he complied. Satan said, "You are a needy and a poor human being. You have nothing! You are a burden on people who fulfill your needs. Your heart desires to have enough possessions to help your brethren, treat your neighbors well, and eat to your fill so that you no longer need the people and become self-sufficient for their support". Worshipper said, "That is certainly the desire of my heart!" Satan said, "If this is the matter then just go home. I will put two *Dinars* (gold coins) by your bed side every night. You can spend that money on yourself and on your family. This is a better suggestion for you and for other Muslims that I have presented to you than to cut this tree which will stay in its place. Cutting down this tree will not cause any loss to its worshippers [as they will find another tree to worship] and its retention will not benefit the Muslims". The worshipper deliberated on this suggestion from Satan and thought in his heart, "This old man is right! I am not a prophet [of God], hence, it is neither necessary for me to cut this tree nor has God commanded me to cut it so that I will be sinning if I don't cut it. The suggestion put forth by the old man is more profitable!" Hence, he made a deal with the old man [who was Satan in disguise] and took oath to not cut down the tree. He then returned to his place of worship to spend the night there. In the morning he saw two *Dinars* by his bed side as promised. Same thing happened on the second day. On third day, he found nothing. He became very angry and, in that state took an axe, put it on his shoulder and started walking. On his way, he came across Satan in disguise of the same old man who asked, "Where do you intend to go?" The worshipper said, "I am going to cut down that tree!" Satan said, "By God! You are a liar! You can neither get there nor can you cut down that tree!" Upon hearing this, the worshipper tried to grab the old man and throw him on the ground. Satan said, "Do not have this thought [that you can do it]". After that, Satan grabbed the worshipper, threw him on the ground and sat on his chest and the worshipper started to flutter like a trapped bird in between his two legs. Worshipper tried his level best but could not become free. He gave up and said, "Let me go and tell me how I overcame you before and how you overcame me this time?" Satan said, "First time, you forged ahead with anger for the sake of God and your intention was the Hereafter [and not any worldly profit or benefit], that's why, God subjugated me to you. This time, you became angry for the sake of your lower self and the world (worldly benefit), that's why, I have overcome you!" This incident ascertains the following saying of God:

وَلَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٣٩﴾
إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلَصِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾

"[Satan said:] I will misguide all of them together except for your servants among them who are sincere [in your path]." (Qur'an, Chapter 15, Verses 39-40)

Human beings get rid of Satan [and his entrapments, insinuations, conspiracies, and destructions of human lives] only by means of sincerity [to God].

Reality of Sincerity: Everything can be imagined having admixing of other things in it. When something is devoid and cleansed of other things then it is called "pure" and the action that results in its purification is called "sincerity" (*Ikhlas*). We have explained the reality of intention and the crux of that discussion is that intention is the movement of a cause (or instigator) that is suitable to one's purpose; if the cause is one and the action has been performed only by this one cause then it is called sincerity, provided that cause is in consonance with one's purpose. The word "sincerity" is specifically used for that action that has been done only for seeking God's proximity and is completely devoid and purified of the impurities of everything that is other than God. A person whose cause of action is showing off, is in danger of [spiritual] destruction. Here we want to discuss that the cause [or instigator] that moves [or instigates] due to the intention (*Niyyah*) of seeking closeness to God, [but] then another cause gets mixed in it (the first cause), whether this second cause is from showing off (*Riya*) or not showing off.

Its example is of a person who fasts with the intention of seeking God's closeness but one's purpose is also to observe [health related] prevention, or performs pilgrimage (*Hajj*) [with the intention of seeking God's closeness but also] to develop a moderate temperament because of the [physical] movement involved in pilgrimage [for health related reasons], or [performs pilgrimage] to protect oneself from the danger one is in in one's own country or to stay away from an enemy or has become fed up with one's spouse and children and desires to stay away from them because of the pilgrimage, or [performs pilgrimage] desiring some relief after being tired of some [long work related] engagement, or one prays late night or early morning (pre-dawn) prayers (*Tahajjud*) for the purpose of staying awake to protect one's house, or one attains knowledge [again with the intention of seeking God's closeness but also] to protect one's wealth and property and to safeguard against the evils of greedy people, or organizes a gathering of teaching and sermon [again with the intention of seeking God's closeness but also] because of boredom and wants to get the pleasure of speaking, or supports spiritual travelers (*Sufis*) and scholars so that they hold one is high esteem in their hearts and ordinary people also look at one with respect and deal with one leniently because one supports Godly people, or writes Qur'an because writing continuously improves one's hand writing, or performs ablution (*Wudu*) [with the intention of seeking God's closeness but also] to provide soothing comfort to the body by doing ablution, or take a bath [again with the intention of seeking God's closeness with bodily purity but also] to remove the bodily smell, or narrates prophetic traditions [with the intention of seeking God's closeness but also] to make people mention one's name in high places, or lives in a mosque (*I'tikaf*) [with the intention of seeking God's closeness but also] to save house rent, or fasts [with the intention of seeking God's closeness but also] to save oneself from the effort of cooking or one thinks that by eating one will not be able to accomplish something, or fulfills the need of a beggar [with the intention of seeking God's closeness but also] because one has become fed up with beggar's asking, or visits a sick so that person or relatives would visit when one is sick, or does any of these things so that

people mention one for these deeds and praise one and one gets fame because of them. In all of these cases, if intention is also to seek God's nearness along with anyone of these [other] objectives, then one's action will exit out of the definition of sincerity (i.e., the action will no longer remain sincere) and it will not be said that the action was done purely for the sake of God, rather it will get admixed with polytheism or other than God.

In summary, if any pleasure from the worldly pleasures is such that the lower self is inclined towards it, desires for it, and finds a place in an action, then due to this pleasure, the sincerity will be [adversely] impacted. It is because a human being is immersed at all times, in the pleasures of the lower self and desires and it rarely happens that any action or worship is devoid of these pleasures and desires. Hence these actions and worships cannot be declared as sincere [as they were not done sincerely for the sake of God alone]. Hence, it has been said that if one attains just one such moment that is purely for the sake of God then that moment will be enough for that person's salvation and safety [in the travails of this world and the next]. It is due to the rarity of the existence of sincerity, as it is extremely difficult to cleanse and purify the heart from impurities and pleasures [from the lower self], rather, the pure and sincere action is such that its cause and driver is nothing other than seeking God's proximity. If these pleasures and desires are the sole drivers and causes of these actions then the doer of those actions will face hardships because of those actions and this is obvious, but if the intention for these actions is attaining God's nearness and [desires for] these pleasures also get mixed with it then the action no longer remains pure for the sake of God. The addition of [desires for worldly] pleasures in actions [that should have been done purely for the sake of God] can take three forms: the addition will be in the form of conjoining or partnership or cooperation, and these forms have been explained before.

The meaning of sincerity is that actions are devoid of any impurities [of selfish, evil and wrong intentions and motives], whether they are few or a lot, and the only intention for doing them is God's nearness and there is no other cause. Such [pure and sincere] actions can only be imagined from those people who love God and are immersed in [their strivings for] the Hereafter and there is no room left in their hearts for the love of the world (worldliness) to the extent they don't even like to eat and drink. Their inclination for eating and drinking is like fulfilling the call of nature which is a human need and demand of the human body. Similarly, eating and drinking is also a human need and demand of being human. They do not get inclined towards food because it is food or it is pleasurable, rather, they get inclined towards it because food gives energy and strength to the body and that provides the ability to worship and obey God. They desire to get rid of the evil of hunger, so they do not even have the need to eat. Their hearts do not have inclination towards unnecessary needs, instead they are contented with the needed amount and they consider it a need for their path to God. One whose sole point of focus is God in all of one's thoughts and actions, even when one does something like eating or answering the call of nature, then one's actions are pure and in all of one's movements and stillness, one's intention is correct. Hence this person sleeps for gaining strength for worship and to give the body rest for future acts of obedience. In that case, one's sleep also becomes an act of worship and one is

granted the rank of the sincere (*Mukhlaseen*), and one who does not have this state, the doors of sincerity in actions gets shut for one. Sincerity is rarely apparent from such a one, otherwise generally speaking, all of one's worship is for a worldly purpose. One who has the love of God and of the Hereafter predominant [in one's inner being], all of one's movements and stillness become sincerity due to the dominance of that effect and every action of one appears with sincerity. On the other hand, there is this person who has the love of the world, worldly power and governance dominates [in one's inner being], such a person has an overall inclination towards other than God and this [inner] quality [of desiring other than God] dominates all of one's movements and stillness and none of one's worship like prayers, fasting and charity, stays protected from it.

Cure for the Lack of Sincerity: It is learned from this detail that lack of sincerity is a disease and its cure is to eradicate pleasures of the lower self (*Nafs*), severing greed with the world, and to become attached to the Hereafter in such a way that it starts to dominate the heart. In this manner, sincerity will become easy for one. How many actions are there in which human being endures tiredness and hardships and thinks that one is doing something purely for the sake of God, even though one's thought is wrong about it? The reason for this self-delusion is that one does not know the cause of this subversion and one has the misunderstanding of considering one's actions as purified of all deformities. One Gnostic repeated thirty years of his prayers merely because one day when he arrived at the mosque, the congregational prayer had already started and he did not find a place in the first row and was compelled to pray in the second row and felt shy about it. After this event, he had the realization that he prayed in the first row because people used to look at him [for being foremost in prayers] that made him happy and that's why, he felt shy standing in the second row [due to getting late once]. With this thought, he had the realization that his thirty years of prayers [in the mosque] had been wasted and he needed to repeat them [this time with sincerity by doing them purely for the sake of God alone and for nothing else in terms of ulterior motives and for no one besides]. This is a subtle catastrophe and not everyone is capable of understanding it. It rarely happens that people remain protected from the deformities in [pious] actions, and only those people become aware of them and think about protecting themselves, who have been Divinely bestowed with the ability to do good. Negligent will see that their good deeds have been wasted in the Hereafter. Following verse of Qur'an refers to the same:

قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْأَخْسَرِينَ أَعْمَالًا ﴿١٠٣﴾

ٱلَّذِينَ ضَلَّ سَعْيُهُمْ فِي ٱلْحَيَوٰةِ ٱلدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ صُنْعًا ﴿١٠٤﴾

"Say to them (O Prophet Muhammad!), 'Should we tell you about people who are in complete loss in terms of their actions? These are the people whose hard work in the world has gone to waste and they have this [mistaken and self-delusional] thought (assumption and conjecture) that they are doing good deeds.'" (Qur'an, Chapter 18, Verses 103-104)

The biggest target of this catastrophe is the [religious] scholars or scholastic theologians (*Ulema*), because most scholars work towards propagating the faith, and they find pleasure in having dominance over others [because they are doing something that vast majority of other people are not doing], there is happiness in having power [over other people's hearts] and following, and praise and appreciation causes the heart to jump with joy. Satan makes this matter [of preaching] dubious to them and says [to them by means of insinuation in the heart, making them proud and arrogant about their place in the society], "Your purpose is to propagate God's path and to defend the Divine law that was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)". There are many preachers around who consider it their favor to work towards the reformation of the general masses and of the governmental leaders, and their happiness knows no bounds when people listen to them and act upon their advice. It is their claim that they are happy because God has chosen them for helping with His path and reformation of the creation, although, their state is such that if simple-minded people go to another scholar like them to benefit from, then sorrow and jealousy would kill them [proverbially speaking]. If their objective had [truly] been admonishing and advising people, then they would have thanked God for that as He had saved them from a big responsibility by shifting it on others, and protected them from a delicate and dangerous obligation. Satan does not leave them alone even at this point and tells them, "The real reason for your remorse is that you have been deprived of the Divine recompense of the propagation of the Divine path, protection of knowledge, and reformation of the creation". This poor person does not know that bowing one's head down before God's decision has far greater Divine recompense than what's attained from guiding the creation. Only those people persevere in this test who are aware of the deception of Satan and of the lower self, and keep testing their lower selves [for presence or lack of sincerity]. Nevertheless, knowing the reality of sincerity (*Ikhlas*) and acting upon it is a deep ocean. Many people drown in it and rarely get saved from it. These are the people who have been mentioned in the following verse as an exception:

إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمُ الْمُخْلَصِينَ

"[Satan in his conversation to God saying that he will misguide everyone, in the aftermath of the creation of Adam (Peace and blessings of God be upon him), God's command to angels and Satan to bow down before him, Satan's blatant refusal to comply, and God's commandment to eternally cast Satan away from His mercy,] Except for those who are sincere (those who do things purely for the sake of God and not for any ulterior motive or desire from the lower self) from among Your servants [who are the only ones I (Satan) will not be able to influence]". (Qur'an, Chapter 15, Verse 40)

A servant [of God] should keep a deep eye on these subtle matters, lest one becomes a follower of Satan in a state of heedlessness.

Someone asked Prophet Muhmmad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) about sincerity to which he responded:

أَنْ تَقُولَ رَبِّيَ اللّٰهُ ثُمَّ تَسْتَقِيمُ كَمَا أُمِرْتَ

"It is that you say, 'God is my Lord!', then persevere in that by standing firm [with this conviction] as you have been [Divinely] commanded". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Tirmidhi*)

In other words, you neither worship your desires from the lower self (*Nafs*) nor worship your lower self, rather, just worship your Lord [alone] and stay firm with perseverance in that as you have been [Divinely] commanded to persevere. This prophetic tradition alludes to severing all hopes from all other than God and in reality, this is the sincerity (*Ikhlas*).

Dangers and Impediments that Cause Muddiness in Sincerity: There are many dangers (spoilers) that cause muddiness in sincerity. Some of these are manifest, some are hidden, some are manifest with weakness, and some are hidden with strength. However, the differences in their degrees are impossible to comprehend without examples, hence we first mention an example from ostentation. Sincerity is more endangered by ostentation or showing off. For example, a worshipper is busy with prayers and is doing so with utmost sincerity. During that, a few people or someone came where one was praying. Satan thought of it as a good opportunity who got there and started to tell one, "Pray very well so that the people looking at you will get a good impression and will respect you by thinking of you as righteous, and not look at you with disdain, nor backbite against you". Upon hearing this [from Satan by means of insinuation in the heart], one adopts [outer] humility in the organs and continues praying with more tranquility and creates more outer beauty in one's prayers. This is the outer ostentation which is apparent to even the beginner spiritual travelers. This is the first degree of ostentation.

Second degree is that the spiritual traveler (worshipper) perceives this danger and adopts a strategy to protect oneself from it. This spiritual traveler does not obey Satan [in this case] and does not pay attention to him, instead, one stays indulged in one's prayer the way one was prior to the arrival of people. Satan [again] comes to one in the garb of goodness and righteousness and tells one, "People follow you, walk in your footsteps, keep an eye on every movement of yours, whatever you do impacts their [own] actions, and they imagine each and every action of yours as a model worth following, if you act well then you will get Divine recompense for their [good] deeds as well, and if you get slackness in your actions then you will be held responsible for [slackness in] their actions as well. Hence, you should act well in front of other people. Haply they may follow you in humility and in beautifying their [righteous] actions". This degree is more subtle and complex than the first. Sometimes, people who do not get deceived by the first devising of Satan, get deceived by the second. This is also [a form of] ostentation that nullifies sincerity. It is because if there is any goodness in the eyes of one in humility and beautification of [Divine] worship and does not want people to be deprived of them then why one does not do this [act of worship] in solitude? Furthermore, it cannot be accepted that other people's selves are more endearing to one compared to one's own self and wants someone else's betterment than one's own. It is merely a Satanic exhortation who is deceiving one into have a following and [consequently] putting one into ostentation. One who is capable of being followed, who

is firm in one's own self [in not giving in to wrongs], whose heart is illumined, and its rays of illuminations reach others and make them illumined too [from within]. In that case, one will surely get Divine recompense for being followed but the Satanic persuasion [just mentioned] is merely a deceptive exhortation, however, the follower will surely get Divine recompense for following, while person being followed will be accountable for [wrongfully] giving into this exhortation and can even get [Divinely] punished for [deceptively] displaying a characteristic that one does not even have.

Third degree is even more subtle and complex than the second which is to test one's own lower self and be aware of Satan's deception and know that the difference between the private and the public (inner and outer) [spiritual] state is mere ostentation and that these prayers in private should be same as they are in front of others and one should feel ashamed in front of one's self and God when one tries to uncharacteristically adopt humility only for the sake of other people. Instead, one should focus on one's self in solitude and try to create the same goodness and beauty in one's prayers that one creates in the prayers in front of others. This is also a form of hidden (secret) ostentation, although it is not apparently realized because one prays well in solitude so that one can pray well in front of others, thus, one's eyes is on people in both private and public. Sincerity is there when people and animals become equal in one's eyes so that just like one does not beautify one's worship in front of animals, one should also not do it in front of others. There is only one way of staying away from ostentation which is that one's inclination towards creations should be like what one has towards stones, whether it is in public or private, otherwise one will be considered as indulged with the creations in both states (situations). This is an extremely subtle deception of Satan and one is rarely informed of that.

Fourth degree, that is the most subtle of all degrees, is that when one is praying in a public gathering, Satan would not persuade one to adopt humility because he knows that one will not get trapped in that deception. Grudgingly, Satan tells one, "Ponder over the Divine grandeur and majesty and in the sanctity of His Being whom you are standing before in worship, and be afraid that He looks at your heart while you are heedless of Him". Upon hearing this [in the heart], one immediately becomes attentive in the heart and adopts humility and lowliness on one's organs and thinks that this action is pure sincerity, even though it is a pure deception. It is because one would have adopted humility and presence of the heart in solitude and would have pondered over the Divine majesty then, and not specifically in a public gathering. One way of safeguarding against this deception is that one's heart remains busy with Divine remembrance in solitude as it is in a public gathering. It should not be the case that the state of one's heart becomes different when people arrive compared to what it was in solitude and one will not be considered sincere until then. As long as one's heart becomes different when people are looking compared to when animals are looking, one remains remote from the limpidity of sincerity and one's inner being gets soiled with the hidden polytheism of ostentation, which is more concealed than the crawl of a dark black ant crawling on a dark black rock in a dark black night, as mentioned in a tradition of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him). Only the one whose insight is deep and has been Divinely bestowed with protection, success, and

guidance can remain protected from Satan. Otherwise, Satan is bent on destroying those who resolve to perform Divine worship, and is not negligent of them even for a moment, until he compels them to commit ostentation, and he not only does that in big things, rather he keeps a strict watch over every action of God's servants to the extent of not even sparing mundane matters [for deceiving them into ostentation].

Excellence and Reality of Truthfulness

Excellence of Truthfulness: God says:

رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ

"There are some people [of high resolve] who are such that when they took covenant with God, they were truthful in it [by fulfilling it in letter and spirit]." (Qur'an, Chapter 33, Verse 23)

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

إِنَّ الصِّدْقَ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْبِرِّ وَالْبِرُّ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَإِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لَيَصْدُقُ حَتَّى يُكْتَبَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ صِدِّيقًا وَإِنَّ الْكَذِبَ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْفُجُورِ وَالْفُجُورُ يَهْدِي إِلَى النَّارِ وَإِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لَيَكْذِبُ حَتَّى يُكْتَبَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ كَذَّابًا

"Truthfulness (*Sidq*) leads one to righteousness and righteousness leads one to Paradise. And a person [of high resolve] is truthful [in words, thoughts, and deeds] until one is written as truthful (*Siddeeq*) before God. And falsehood leads one to evil and evil leads one to Hell. And a person tells lies until one is written as a liar before God". (Narrated by *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Abdullah ibn Mas'ud [May God be pleased with him])

Abdullah ibn Abbas (May God be pleased with him) said, "There are four qualities, if possessed by one, will cause one to attain salvation - truthfulness, shyness (modesty), beautiful inner character traits and qualities, and gratitude". Muhammad ibn Ali Kanafi (May God have mercy upon him) said, "We have found the path to God to be based on three elements - firstly truthfulness, secondly truth, and thirdly justice and fairness. Justice pertains to the heart; truth pertains to the organs and truthfulness pertains to the intellects. God revealed to Prophet David (Peace and blessings of God be upon him), "One who ascertains me in one's inner being (*Batin*), I ascertain that person publicly in front of all creations". One man who was in the [spiritual] gathering of Shibli (May God have mercy upon him) got up screaming [in a state of *Wajd* or spiritual ecstasy] and within moments ran towards and jumped into the River Tigris. Shibli (May God have mercy upon him) said, "If this man is truthful, God will grant him salvation as He granted salvation to Prophet Moses (Peace and blessings of God be upon him), and if he is a liar [for feigning the state of spiritual ecstasy to look good in the eyes of the people to gain their trust for some worldly motive], God will drown him as he drowned Pharaoh". Wahub ibn Munabbeh (May God have mercy upon him) said, "I have seen twenty-two

sentences written in the footnotes of Torah that the righteous from the Children of Israel used to read collectively. Those sentences are: no treasure is more beneficial than knowledge, no possession is not profitable than knowledge, no lineage is more degrading than anger, no companion is more beautifying than [righteous] actions, no friend is more fault-attributing [to one] than ignorance, there is no honor greater than God-fear, no kindness is greater than abandoning caprice, no action is superior to contemplation, no pious act is superior to patience, no evil is more humiliating than arrogance, no medicine is softer than softness (leniency), no sickness is more painful than foolishness, no prophet is more justice-oriented than truth, no argument is more instructive than truthfulness, no poverty is more degrading than greed, no opulence is more humiliating than hoarding, no life is better than [one with] health, no economy is more pleasant than purity, no worship is better than humility, no abstinence is better than contentment, no protector is more protecting than silence, and no absent is nearer than death".

Reality of Truthfulness, its Meaning and Degrees: The word truthfulness (*Sidq*) applies on six meanings: truthfulness in words, truthfulness in intention, truthfulness in resolve, truthfulness in determination, truthfulness in completing the determination, truthfulness in actions, and truthfulness in investigating all the spiritual stations (*Maqamat*) of the Divine path (*Deen*). One who is attributed with truthfulness in these six meanings, is truthful (*Siddeeq* or Gnostic or intimate of God) [This explanation shows that truthfulness in its totality, by adherence to it in these six matters, leads one to the pinnacle of human achievement and to highest spiritual ranks attainable by a human being. Conversely, adherence to lies and to all of its manifestations like deception, dishonesty, injustice, hate, etc., leads one to a downward trajectory to the depths of the lowest of the low, complete darkness and abject failure]. Then there are many degrees of the truthful. One who is truthful with a certain matter with be termed truthful with respect to that matter whose truth is found in one. Now we will explain all of these types.

First Degree of Truthfulness is in Words: This truthfulness is with conveying the news and in words that are about conveying the news (or events). News is related to both the past as well as to the present and future. It also includes fulfilling promises. It is incumbent upon every servant [of God, i.e., human being] to protect one's words and when one utters any word with the tongue, must do so with truthfulness. This is the brightest and the clearest type of truthfulness. One who protects one's tongue [from falsehood] and will not say things against the reality of matters will be called "truthful". However, there are two aspects of this truthfulness: one is to stay away from allusions as some people say that the lie conveyed by means of allusion is not a lie. Staying away from allusions is a perfection of this type of truthfulness as it gets used as a substitute for lies. Lies have been prohibited because [in a lie] a thing gets explained in a way that is contrary to the facts. Nevertheless, the perfection of truthfulness by means of the tongue (words) is to stay away from outright lies as well as from allusions (words that intentionally convey double meanings and subtle lies that mislead people to wrong conclusions), and second perfection is that whatever one says, one should also have regard for the meanings. For example, if one reads the following verse:

وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ

"I have turned my face (the complete being with complete focus) towards the One who has created the heavens and the earth." (Qur'an, Chapter 6, Verse 79)

However, [while saying the above verse by means of a prayer to God but] if one's heart is deviant from God and is indulged in worldly desires and hopes, then this person is a liar. Similarly, if one says, "You alone do we worship" (Qur'an, Chapter 1, Verse 5), or says, "I am Your servant", but there is nothing in terms of servitude to God in one and instead, one considers one's lower self or the world or the worldly lusts as one's god [in terms of paying obeisance to them], then such a one will not be considered truthful in one's words. One who has servitude to something, becomes its servant [and loses one's true freedom as a consequence]. Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) used to address the rebellious of his nation as, "O servants of the world!" Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

تَعِسَ عَبْدُ الدِّينَارِ، تَعِسَ عَبْدُ الدِّرْهَمِ وَعَبْدُ الْحُلَّةِ وَعَبْدُ الْخَمِيصَةِ

"Destruction is for the servant of *Dinar* (gold currency), destruction is for the servant of *Dirham* (silver currency), and for the servant of dresses, and for the servant of food". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Sahih Bukhari* on the authority of Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him])

In this prophetic narration, people have been ascribed [as belonging] to the thing they are subservient to. The true servant of God is the one who first attains liberation from other than God. After [attaining] this freedom, heart will be emptied out [of other than God] and the belief in servitude to God will get firmly ingrained in it. This belief will immerse one in Divine love and one's outer and inner being, after getting liberated from every imprisonment and entrapment of other than God, will get busy with Divine obedience, and one's objective will not remain as anything other than God. After reaching this spiritual station, one ascends to higher spiritual stations that are termed as "liberation", in other words, one becomes liberated from having any intention for God on one's own, rather, whatever God intends for one, whether it is for closeness or remoteness, one becomes contented with it and one's intention gets annihilated (*Fana*) in God's intention. Such a one gets liberated twice: first time, one gets liberated from other than God, and second time, one gets liberated from one's own lower self (*Nafs*). At that time, one becomes extinct (*Fana*) with respect to one's lower self, and subsists (*Baqa* or exists) with respect to one's Lord, i.e., one moves when He moves one and remains still when He makes one still. If He inflicts one with calamity, one remains satisfied with it as there is no capacity left in one to seek, desire, request, entreat or object to anything, rather, one becomes in front of God, like a dead body on the hand of the bather (person responsible for doing the ritual of washing dead bodies before their burial). This is the intensity of truthfulness in servitude to God (*Sidq fi al-'Uboodiyyah*). The person of truth is the one whose existence is for the Lord and not for one's lower self. This is the degree of the Gnostics or friends and intimates of God (*Siddiqeen*) and liberation from other than God is among the ranks of the friends and intimates of God,

afterwards, servitude to God is attained. Before this degree, no one can be termed as *Sadiq* (truthful or dedicated to truth).

Second Degree of Truthfulness is in Intention and Intent: The crux of the truthfulness of intention and intent is sincerity. In other words, the servant [of God] only has the intention for God in each and every action and in every movement or stillness of one. If pleasures of the lower self (*Nafs*) get admixed with it, the truthfulness of intention will become nullified and such person can be termed a liar, as mentioned in a prophetic narration [of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)] about sincerity in which it is said that a scholar will be asked on the Day of Judgment if one acted according to one's knowledge to which the scholar will cite numerous works one had accomplished. God will say to that, "You are speaking a lie, rather, you desired that people would call you a 'scholar'". Here the actions of the scholar have not been refuted or denied, instead, one's intention has been refuted [as it was not there purely for the sake of God]. One Gnostic said that the health (full presence) of Divine unity in intention [in terms of it being purely for the sake of God and not for any worldly or ulterior selfish motives] is truthfulness. The upshot of one meaning of truthfulness is that the intention should be pure and that is the very sincerity. It is necessary for a truthful person to be sincere.

Third Degree of Truthfulness is in Resolve: Sometimes one has resolve for something and [for example,] says in one's heart, "If God grants me wealth, I will then give that all out in charity or spend half of it in the path of God; if God gives me [governmental] authority then I will fulfill my official responsibilities with fairness and justice and will not disobey God by committing oppression or by having an unfair and partial attitude towards the creations (people)". Truthfulness in resolve (*Sidq fi al-'Adhema*) in one is strong in the resolve [for what one wants to accomplish] and is firm in the intention. When we say "truthful" in these meanings, it refers to the person whose resolve is complete and strong in matters related to good [and not related to evil,] and there is no deviation (swerving), weakness, or hesitation in that.

Fourth Degree of Truthfulness is in Fulfilling the Determination: Sometimes one makes the determination because it does not take much [of an effort] to do so, but when it is time to act according to that determination, and one also has the ability to carry it out, lusts [and desires] from the lower self (*Nafs*) gain strength, causing all determinations to be set aside. This situation is contrary to the truthfulness in fulfilling the determination. God says:

رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوا۟ مَا عَٰهَدُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ ۖ فَمِنْهُم مَّن قَضَىٰ نَحْبَهُۥ وَمِنْهُم مَّن يَنتَظِرُ ۖ

"There are some people who took a covenant with God and fulfilled it and they were truthful in that. Then there are also those among them, who have completed their vows and some who are waiting to fulfil them [when it is time to fulfil them]." (Qur'an, Chapter 33, Verse 23)

There are some others, who violated their covenants with God and the following verse was revealed about them:

وَمِنْهُم مَّنْ عَٰهَدَ ٱللَّهَ لَئِنْ ءَاتَىٰنَا مِن فَضْلِهِۦ لَنَصَّدَّقَنَّ وَلَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ ٱلصَّٰلِحِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾
فَلَمَّآ ءَاتَىٰهُم مِّن فَضْلِهِۦ بَخِلُوا۟ بِهِۦ وَتَوَلَّوا۟ وَّهُم مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾
فَأَعْقَبَهُمْ نِفَاقًا فِى قُلُوبِهِمْ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ يَلْقَوْنَهُۥ بِمَآ أَخْلَفُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ مَا وَعَدُوهُ وَبِمَا كَانُوا۟ يَكْذِبُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾

“There are some among them who take an oath with God that if God bestows upon them [a lot of wealth] from His Grace then they will spend generously in charity and will do a lot of righteous works [with that wealth]. So, when God bestowed upon them with His Grace, they became stingy with it and they are accustomed to such deviations [in contravening their pledges]. Hence, as a punishment, God established hypocrisy in their hearts that will remain [therein] until the day they go back [to God after their death] because of the reason that they violated their covenant with God and because they used to lie.” (Qur’an, Chapter 9, Verses 75-77)

Here determination has been construed as covenant, violation of covenant as lying, and fulfilling of covenant as truthfulness. This truthfulness is stronger than the third [degree of] truthfulness because sometimes the lower self (*Nafs*) makes the determination, but when it is time to act, the stirring of lusts and availability of their means, dissuade one from fulfilling and carrying out the determination (resolve). Abu Sa’eed al-Hazaaz (May have mercy upon him) saw in his dream that two angels descended from heaven and asked him, “What is truthfulness (*Sidq*)?” He responded, “Fulfilling one’s covenant is truthfulness”. Angels ascertained that and ascended back to the heaven.

Fifth Degree of Truthfulness is in Works and Actions: Truthfulness in actions (or works) is that one is constantly striving to avoid a situation where one’s external actions do not [falsely] argue in favor of something that one does even possess in one’s inner being. Truthfulness in actions does not mean that actions (or works) should be abandoned [due to the fear of hypocrisy in what appears on the outside compared to one’s true inner reality], rather one’s inner being (*Batin*) should be such that it ascertains the outer being (*Zahir*). An ostentatious person is the one who wants people to consider one endowed with praiseworthy inner qualities based on what one’s [outer] actions show. Many people who pray, adopt the appearance of humility in their prayers, although their purpose is not for people to see them, however, their hearts are heedless [of God] during their prayers. A person observing them thinks that one is standing before God [in prayers in a state of humility and submissiveness before Divine majesty, although one is standing in a marketplace in one’s inner being and is immersed is some lust. The actions and works, from their states of being, reflect the [perceived] state of their inner being, but in reality, that is not the [true] state of their inner being. Hence, they are immersed in lies, and truthfulness in actions is demanded from them. Some people walk with great poise, tranquility, and dignity, although there is neither poise nor tranquility in their inner beings. These people are also not truthful in their actions, even though, they are neither inclined towards creations nor is the ostentatious display their objective. Only that person can remain protected against falsehood of actions whose inner and outer beings are the same or whose inner being is better than the outer being. Due to this fear [of hypocrisy and ostentatious display], some people keep their outer

appearance as bad and clothes dusty so that no one can use their outer appearance to argue for the goodness of their inner beings. If inner being is not good in accordance with their outer appearance and people think well of them, then it would be a lie. If outer being is intentionally opposite to the inner being [so that one appears good on the outside in contravention with their unflattering inner reality] then it will be termed as ostentation that will eradicate sincerity, and if it is the case of doing so unintentionally, then truthfulness is lost. Truthfulness is that the outer and the inner beings are in consonance and harmony with each other. It is learned from this detail that this harmony between the outer and the inner being is also a type of truthfulness.

Sixth Degree of Truthfulness is in Spiritual Stations: This is an extremely high and rare degree of truthfulness. It is related to the spiritual stations (*Maqamat*) of the Divine path (*Deen*) like fear [of God] and hope [in God], sanctity of the Divine [in one's eyes], abstinence [from worldliness], accepting the Divine will, trust in God, love of God, etc. When people have some elements of truthfulness in them and when these elements are revealed [in the form of attainment of realities of these spiritual stations], then this term (truthfulness in spiritual stations) applies to them. Besides these elements, there are some implications and realities [of truthfulness in these spiritual stations]. One who reaches the realities of these matters is a consummate truthful person. When something becomes dominant in one and its reality is perfected in one, then one who is endowed with it is termed truthful. For example, it is said that so-and-so is truthful in spiritual strivings, i.e., spiritual striving is dominant in one. Or it is said that so-and-so is truthful in fear of God, in other words, the reality of God-fear is perfected in one. God says:

لَّيْسَ ٱلْبِرَّ أَن تُوَلُّوا۟ وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ ٱلْمَشْرِقِ وَٱلْمَغْرِبِ وَلَٰكِنَّ ٱلْبِرَّ مَنْ ءَامَنَ بِٱللَّهِ وَٱلْيَوْمِ ٱلْءَاخِرِ وَٱلْمَلَٰٓئِكَةِ وَٱلْكِتَٰبِ وَٱلنَّبِيِّۦنَ وَءَاتَى ٱلْمَالَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِۦ ذَوِى ٱلْقُرْبَىٰ وَٱلْيَتَٰمَىٰ وَٱلْمَسَٰكِينَ وَٱبْنَ ٱلسَّبِيلِ وَٱلسَّآئِلِينَ وَفِى ٱلرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ وَءَاتَى ٱلزَّكَوٰةَ وَٱلْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَٰهَدُوا۟ ۖ وَٱلصَّٰبِرِينَ فِى ٱلْبَأْسَآءِ وَٱلضَّرَّآءِ وَحِينَ ٱلْبَأْسِ ۗ أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ ٱلَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا۟ ۖ

"Righteousness is not in turning your face east or west [in ritual prayers or devotions]. Instead, righteousness is that one has certitude in God and on the Day of Judgment and on angels and on [Divinely revealed] books and on [God's] prophets, and one gives out wealth [in humanitarian endeavors and charity] for the love of God, to the relatives, orphans, needy, travelers [who are away from their own wealth and properties thus becoming needy as a result of traveling], requestors (those you ask for help out of needs), freeing up the imprisoned [to bail them out by compensating people they wronged on the condition that they will abandon evil and live a righteous life from that point onwards], and [such a] one is also regular in prayers, pays compulsory poor-due (*Zakat*) and fulfills one's covenants (promises, oaths, commitments) when covenants are made. And these are the people who patiently persevere in poverty (hardships), illness, and war [when imposed upon them by aggressors]. These are the ones who are truthful." (Qur'an, Chapter 2, Verse 177)

Degrees of the Truthful: The upshot of this entire explanation is that there are uncountable degrees of truthfulness in these [various] spiritual stations. Sometimes, a servant [of God] has truthfulness in some matters but not in other matters. If one is truthful in all matters, then such a person is truthful (*Siddeeq*) in reality. It has been narrated in traditions that God revealed to Prophet Moses (Peace and blessings of God be upon him), "When I make a servant of Mine My beloved then I send such hardships and tribulations on one that if they were sent to mountains, they would not be able to bear them. I then see, how one adopts truthfulness on My tribulations. If one exercises patience, I make one my friend and beloved and if one makes a loud uproar and complains to the creations about Me then I disgrace one and do not care about such a one". The sign of truthfulness is that both the tribulations and acts of obedience [to God] are kept hidden [from the eyes and knowledge of people] and one considers it bad that creations become aware of them.

Chapter 18 – Self-Examination and Self-Evaluation for Taking Oneself to Task for all Shortcomings, Negativities and Vices

Having a closer look into one's actions by honestly and objectively self-evaluating and taking oneself to task for any excesses committed against oneself and others, is a tremendous way of seeking Divine guidance, justice, fairness, self-reformation and purification of the soul, that are imperatives for advancement in the spiritual path to perfection of the core of the human being. An unexamined life sees itself repeating the same mistakes and ill-actions over and over again. On the other hand, critical self-evaluation to find one's own faults, shortcomings, mistakes, and ill-actions is the path for turning things around for the better for oneself first and then for fellow human beings. It reforms and strengthens mutual relations, and promotes harmony and peace between peoples and nations. The peace that human being seeks starts within and self-evaluation starts that within oneself. Self-evaluation and taking oneself to task are vital qualities for spiritual travelers on the path of truth and are indispensable tools for reformation at both personal and collective levels. Ghazali provides an insightful exposition of this subject in his *magnum opus* "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God" in the eight chapter or book in the fourth volume. It is presented here in condensed form as follows [24]:

Explanation of Self-Examination (*Muraqaba*) and Self-Evaluation (*Muhasaba*)

God, the Exalted, says:

وَنَضَعُ ٱلْمَوَٰزِينَ ٱلْقِسْطَ لِيَوْمِ ٱلْقِيَٰمَةِ فَلَا تُظْلَمُ نَفْسٌ شَيْـًٔا ۖ وَإِن كَانَ
مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِّنْ خَرْدَلٍ أَتَيْنَا بِهَا ۗ وَكَفَىٰ بِنَا حَٰسِبِينَ

"On the Day of Judgment, a scale of balance will be established, so that there will be no injustice done to anyone. And if one's [good, pious, righteous] deed will be worth the size of a mustard seed, We will present it there [to weigh it against one's wrong deeds to see if one's good accomplishments in the worldly life outweigh the evil ones gathered or vice versa], and We are enough to hold everyone accountable [for their deeds or misdeeds in their worldly sojourn to recompense them accordingly with absolute justice and fairness]." (Qur'an, Chapter 21, Verse 47)

وَوُضِعَ ٱلْكِتَٰبُ فَتَرَى ٱلْمُجْرِمِينَ مُشْفِقِينَ مِمَّا فِيهِ وَيَقُولُونَ يَٰوَيْلَتَنَا
مَالِ هَٰذَا ٱلْكِتَٰبِ لَا يُغَادِرُ صَغِيرَةً وَلَا كَبِيرَةً إِلَّآ أَحْصَىٰهَا ۚ
وَوَجَدُوا۟ مَا عَمِلُوا۟ حَاضِرًا ۗ وَلَا يَظْلِمُ رَبُّكَ أَحَدًا

“When the register of deeds [that is constantly gathered for everyone after reaching the age of discernment] is placed in front [on the Day of Judgment], you will see the criminals afraid of what’s written in it and they will say, ‘Woe be to us! This register of deeds is so strange that it did not spare anything from being recorded, whether it is a small or a big sin’, and whatever they did [in their worldly lives], they will find it present therein, and your Lord will not do injustice or oppress anyone.” (Qur’an, Chapter 18, Verse 49)

يَوْمَ يَبْعَثُهُمُ ٱللَّهُ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُهُم بِمَا عَمِلُوٓا۟ ۚ أَحْصَىٰهُ ٱللَّهُ وَنَسُوهُ ۚ وَٱللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ شَهِيدٌ

“On the day when God will resurrect everyone [by bringing them all back to life after their deaths in the worldly lives] then He will tell them all they did. God has preserved all, that these people have forgotten [in terms of their deeds and misdeeds during their worldly sojourn]. And God is the witness over each and everything [whether good or bad, done either secretly or openly in the world].” (Qur’an, Chapter 58, Verse 6)

يَوْمَئِذٍ يَصْدُرُ ٱلنَّاسُ أَشْتَاتًا لِّيُرَوْا۟ أَعْمَٰلَهُمْ ﴿٦﴾
فَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُۥ ﴿٧﴾
وَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُۥ ﴿٨﴾

“On that Day [of Judgment], people will return in groups so they can all see their deeds [they did in their worldly lives]. So, the one who has done a particle [weight’s worth] of good deed will see it and one who has done a particle [weight’s worth] of evil will also see it [hence, no one should take good or evil done in this world for granted and consider it of no consequence, as everything one does has consequences of varying degrees that may not be immediately apparent].” (Qur’an, Chapter 99, Verses 6-8)

ثُمَّ تُوَفَّىٰ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ

“Then everyone will get a full recompense for what they did, and they will not suffer any kind of injustice or unfairness therein.” (Qur’an, Chapter 2, Verse 281)

يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُّحْضَرًا وَمَا عَمِلَتْ مِن سُوٓءٍ تَوَدُّ لَوْ أَنَّ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَهُۥٓ أَمَدًۢا بَعِيدًا ۗ وَيُحَذِّرُكُمُ ٱللَّهُ نَفْسَهُۥ ۗ

"On that Day [of Judgment], every person will find the good works one did in front and also the evil works, and would wish to have a tremendous distance between oneself and that day. And God makes you fear His [Mighty, Overpowering, All-Encompassing] Being [so you can desist from all wrongs and all harms to yourself and others]." (Qur'an, Chapter 3, Verse 30)

وَٱعْلَمُوٓا۟ أَنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِىٓ أَنفُسِكُمْ فَٱحْذَرُوهُ

"And know [and have certitude] that God knows the secrets buried in your hearts, so be afraid of Him [and of His knowledge of the secrets buried in your hearts, and of His ability to stop you and take you to task for them]." (Qur'an, Chapter 2, Verse 235)

In the light of these noble verses, the people of inner insight (*Baseerah*) have learned that God is ever-watchful over His servants (human beings), and they will be held accountable for their deeds, and will be inquired about every small thing [they did in their worldly lives]. They have also known this that the sole way of deliverance from these dangers is to continuously have accountability of the lower self (*Nafs*) [in all of its thoughts, feelings, intentions, words, deeds, and the state of being] and truthfully watch over its actions and holding the lower self, accountable for every breath and every movement by taking it to task. It is because if one can hold the accountability of the lower self before its [Divine] accountability [on the Day of Judgment], there will be a reduction in the accountability of the Day of Judgment, and answer to every question [asked on that Day] will be present in one's mind beforehand, and one's final end [based on the Divine judgment] will be the best. One who does not hold the lower self (*Nafs*) accountable [for all it has in terms of thoughts, feelings, intentions, words and deeds], will always be entrapped in regrets, and one's duration of accountability on the Day of Judgment will be long, and one will be submerged in the humiliation of one's sins (evils and wrongdoings) and will attain Divine displeasure. People of inner insight know that the only way of preventing the humiliation of the Day of Judgment is Divine obedience in every matter that He has commanded to be obeyed, and God has commanded patience [against adversities and lusts] and watchfulness [against all evils, negativities and wrongs].

They (people of inner insight) have watched over their lower selves by subjecting it to conditions, then kept a [strict] watch over its states, then they held it accountable, then punished it [for its wrongdoings], then strived spiritually [for its reformation, refinement, purification, and ascension into the Divine Presence], then dealt with it strictly [for its offenses]. Hence, they passed through six stations of watchfulness (self-examination and self-evaluation). Let's elucidate these six stations and explain the reality and

excellence of this watchfulness, and actions necessary for it to happen. The origin of all of these stations is self-accountability that is attained after subjecting lower self (*Nafs*) to conditions and watchfulness of its states, and if accountability reveals losses (excesses or wrongs committed by the lower self and resulting damages done to one's spiritual life, Divine path, and standing before God), then it is subjected to displeasure and punishment [in order to bring it back to the path of rectitude, guidance, refinement, and inner illumination].

First Station of Scrutinization of the Lower Self - Setting Conditions on it: Those who are engaged in business and trade and are partners in business goods, their objective is nothing but profit. Just like a businessperson takes help from one's [business] partner by first handing over the business merchandise [to the partner] to conduct business, then one does the accounting, similarly, intellect is the businessperson for the Hereafter and its purpose that can be termed as profit, is purification of the soul as one's salvation and success depends on it. God says:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَن زَكَّىٰهَا ﴿٩﴾

وَقَدْ خَابَ مَن دَسَّىٰهَا ﴿١٠﴾

"Verily, one attained success [salvation and deliverance from all harms and losses] who purified it (i.e., the self, and by extension the heart and the soul) and dejected loser is the one who destroyed it [with sins, evils, vices, wrongs, and all forms of negativities]." (Qur'an, Chapter 91, Verses 9-10)

The self becomes successful and attains deliverance by means of righteous deeds and intellect takes help from the self in this business, uses it, and subjugates it for the works on which depend its purification, just like a businessperson takes help from one's business partner who is responsible for business transactions, and just like a business partner who, out of desire for profit, wants to impose some conditions first, then keeps an eye on it, then does the accounting of it, then imposes repercussions if one finds any discrepancy or dishonesty in accounting. In a similar manner, intellect seeks these same four matters from the self. First matter is that, it (intellect) should set some conditions and obligations on it (the self), show it the path to success, and instruct it to not deviate from this path [that has been set for it] and keep traversing it with perseverance. Secondly, one should never become negligent of watching over it (the self) at any time because it will commit dishonesty [by deviating from the tasks set forth for it] if slightest bit of negligence is done with it, and it will waste even the actual [business investment] capital. The self is just like a dishonest employee entrusted with business goods who does not dissuade oneself from dishonesty when alone with the goods. Thirdly, self should be subjected to accountability to see if it has fulfilled all the conditions set on it. This is such a trade whose profit will be granted to one in the form of Paradise and companionship of prophets at *Sidratul Muntaha* (the highest point of

spiritual ascension before God that a human being can ever reach). The accounting (accountability) of this trade should be done scrupulously with viewing all the minute details, and one should keep an eye on its profit more than what one does for worldly profits because worldly profit is very insignificant compared to this. Furthermore, worldly profits, no matter how numerous, do not stay. What good is there in goodness that is not permanent?

Hence, it is necessary for every person who has faith in God and the Last Day (Day of Judgment) to perform accountability of one's self and exercise strictness in its every movement, inclinations, thoughts and pleasures because every breath of the human life is such a precious jewel that has no parallel or substitute and with it, one can purchase such a priceless treasure that will never end in eternity. Wasting these precious breaths (moments) or using them in destructive actions is such a momentous loss that no intelligent person can endure. One should adopt solitude to spend a moment every morning after completing morning obligations, to set conditions on one's self, just like a businessperson meets with one's business partner to set conditions before handing over the business merchandize. In this meeting, intellect should tell the self that, "I have no capital other than my lifetime, if it gets wasted then I would have lost everything and I will remain destitute and deprived, and no hope will remain to do business and earn any profit. Today is a new day, God has again given me an opportunity and added more [time] to my life and hence, bestowed upon me a great reward. If I had died then I would have wished to be returned to the world for [just] one more day so I could do good works [and make amends for my wrongdoings] when I return [to the world]. So, you [O self!] should consider yourself as dead and [consider it] has been sent back to the world [after coming back to life]. Beware! Do not let this day go to waste [in wrong or futile endeavors or doing nothing at all]. Every breath [that I take] is such an elegant jewel that is priceless! O self! You should know that there are twenty-four moments in day and night (during a day) and it has been narrated in a prophetic narration that twenty-four treasures are spread out [in front of one] in a day and night. One of these treasures is opened in front of one and one sees this treasure replete with the resplendent illuminations of one's righteous deeds that one did in that moment. The witnessing of these illuminations, that are means of attaining nearness of the Sovereign Majestic Ruler (God), imbues one with tremendous happiness. Then a dark treasure is opened for one that has a bad smell and intense darkness. It is the treasure of that moment in which one committed sin and one gets terrified after seeing that treasure. Then another treasure is opened in which one has been asleep or negligent or had been busy with worldly engagements. One feels remorse and deprivation in seeing that treasure empty and has so much regret as if one has suffered a tremendous loss in a big business, even though the loss could have been avoided if one had so desired. These treasures of the moments of one's life are opened up during the course of one's entire lifetime, hence one should tell one's self, "Make an effort to fill up today's treasures and do not leave them bereft of the precious jewels of good righteous deeds that are your means of [attaining everlasting] dominion [in the realm of the Divine Omnipotence leading one to eternal happiness and everlasting triumph]. Leave behind

the laziness, lethargy and comfort-seeking and do not let your dominion get snatched away from you to be handed over to someone else and you be left with just remorse. Even if you attain the Paradise, the loss you would have incurred due to laziness would not let you attain peace even though this restlessness will be less than the restlessness of the hell". One Gnostic said, "We accept that sins could be forgiven but one will [still] not attain the [lofty spiritual ranks and] degrees of the righteous [even after sins are forgiven]".

This was the advice to the self about using the time [wisely in useful endeavors]. After that, one should advise it about all seven [bodily] organs that are eyes, ears, tongue, stomach, private parts, hands, and feet. One should hand over the control of these organs to the self and should say to it, "These organs are your subjects [that you are ruling over] and they are your servants in this trade and the culmination of this trade will happen by their cooperation". There are seven doors to Hell and every organ is tied (associated) to one door. These doors are appointed for one who disobeys God by means of these organs. One will enter the Hell from the door whose associated organ was used to disobey God [by committing various transgressions, evils, and wrongs]. One should advise the self to protect these organs from sins and wrongdoings. For instance, one should tell the eye to not look at what is impermissible or wrong for it to look at, to not look at someone's privates, nor look at a believer with disdain, rather one should safeguard from looking at anything that is not needed [for one's worldly or next-worldly benefit even though it may be permissible to look at], because God will hold His servants accountable even for useless glances, just like He will do questioning about useless talk. Then it is not sufficient to just restrain eyes from these matters, rather it is also necessary to busy them into matters that are useful for this trade.

These matters are such that eyes have been [Divinely] created for them, such as looking at God's creations with the eye of deriving lessons [about Divine wisdom for their creation and how they point towards their Creator, His Majesty, Glory, Wisdom and Power], or looking at good righteous endeavors in regards to following them, looking at God's book and the prophetic way and studying books of wisdom for the purpose of benefiting from them. Other organs should also be informed about their obligations in a similar manner and should be restrained from matters that harm the trade related to the Divine path (*Deen*). In particular, one should be careful with the tongue and the stomach because the tongue naturally moves on [with talking and saying whatever it wants to say and often does so with no consideration of the consequences] and there is no hardship to it in that movement. Backbiting, complaining behind the back, claiming inner purity, condemnation of fellow creations, criticisms, wishing people ill, praying for harm towards others, uttering profanity, and vulgarity, in all these matters, the sins of the tongue are very severe. All these matters have been explained in the chapter called "Book of the Harms of Tongue" (Chapter 4). Tongue is usually running after these matters, although the [Divine] purpose of its creation is Divine remembrance, advising creations to engage in Divine remembrance, participating in educational discussions, educate servants of God about the path to God (*Deen*) and show them the way of

guidance (*Hidaya*), reconcile two Muslims [or anyone for that matter] who harbor mutual enmity over some matter [to foster mutual peace and social harmony], and conduct similar righteous matters [by means of the tongue, instead of conducting evil, hurtful and harmful matters with it]. This should also be the condition for the self that it will not move the tongue all day on anything other than the Divine remembrance because the speech of a believer is Divine remembrance and one's sight is the learning of lessons [from the signs of God scattered all over the earth, in our mutual dealings, and within our souls], and the silence [of the believer] should be [Divine] worship. God says:

مَّا يَلْفِظُ مِن قَوْلٍ إِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيبٌ عَتِيدٌ

"One does not even utter a word when a swift watcher nearby (*Kiraman Katibeen* or God's two angels that accompany every human being after attaining puberty, and are responsible for recording all of one's words and deeds in one's register of deeds, that will be presented to God on the Day of Judgment to judge that person, as successful or failure in the test of life on earth, and to recompense one accordingly in the eternal life) is ready to record it". (Qur'an, Chapter 50, Verse 18)

Stomach should be admonished to abandon greed and should be disciplined to eat less from the permissible (*Halal*) food, restrained from doubtful food, stopped from lusts, and contented with only the needed amount [instead of eating voraciously]. In this respect, self can be threatened that if it violates the injunctions about the stomach, it will be stopped from all the lusts of the stomach [by means of intentional hunger], it will lose any lusts it attained in this manner and a lot more than that. All organs should be set with similar conditions [that are appropriate for them]. Sins of various organs are not hidden, neither are their [acts of Divine] obedience. Hence, conditions can be easily set, and every organ can be disciplined with and subjected to the abandonment of sins and regularity in righteous deeds. Afterwards, self can be reminded of these acts of [Divine] obedience many times during the day, then one should admonish the self about supererogatory (optional) acts of worship (*Nawafil*) that one is capable of doing in abundance. Details about the nature and means of supererogatory acts of worship should be clearly spelled out for the self. These conditions are needed every day [to keep one on the path of rectitude], however, when human being gets accustomed to them and the self also cooperates in fulfilling these conditions, then there is no need left to continue with setting these conditions. Self should be made to fear negligence and idleness and it should be admonished like a rebellious person because the self is inherently rebellious, disdainful towards Divine obedience, and deviant from [Divine] servitude. However, admonishing and disciplining is effective on it. Imposing conditions like that is the beginning stage of the nurturing and upbringing of the self. This is taking the self to task for accountability before doing the action and sometimes this accountability is done after the action. Evaluation that is done to determine profit or loss and their amount is termed as accountability (*Muhasaba*). Similarly, if a servant of God keeps a watch over one's actions to determine if one has fallen short or committed excesses (wrongs) then it is included in self-accountability. Umar (May God be pleased

with him) said, “Hold accountability of your selves before you are held accountable [before God], and weigh [your deeds] before they are weighed, and be prepared for the great [court] appearance [in the Divine Court on the Day of Judgment for the great judgment about yourself regarding your attainment of either eternal salvation or eternal damnation]”. One should weigh all matters and deliberate well into them [looking at their final outcome] then act upon them.

Second Station of Scrutinization of the Lower Self - Contemplation: When human being is done with admonishing one’s self and has set the conditions as mentioned above, then one should pay attention to contemplation, in other words, deliberate well into one’s actions and cast a deep glance on them, and keep a strict watch over one’s self from the perspective of protecting it [from all wrongs], because if the self is left alone [to its whims], it will become rebellious and will act in a harmful, injurious and debilitating manner. Before further discussion on contemplation, let’s explain its excellences.

Excellences of Contemplation: Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) asked Archangel Gabriel about *Ihsan* (excellence, beauty, and perfection) to which he responded:

أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللّٰهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ

“Worship God as if you see Him [and while you see Him not yet truly, He sees you]”. (Narrated by *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Umar [May God be pleased with him])

[“Ihsan” or spirituality is symbolized by Prophet’s words: “Worship God as if you see Him, and while you see Him not yet [have a living perpetual consciousness] that truly He sees you”. This means that a perfected human being is either in a state of witnessing God with the eye of one’s soul or if one is not able to reach such lofty spiritual state, then one is in a state of perpetual contemplation that one is forever in God’s sight. This spirituality is achieved through concerted efforts to beautify one’s soul by ridding it of all evil inner qualities, dispositions and propensities like anger, hatred, jealousy, envy, arrogance, greed, injustice, impatience, egoism, racism, fanaticism, extremism, self-righteousness, vengeance, hard-heartedness, ignorance, cowardice, entertaining evil thoughts, lust for fame/control/power, and all negative traits and tendencies; and by beautifying one’s soul by inculcating all good [inner] qualities like love, patience, gratitude, forgiveness, kindness, compassion, generosity, humility, nobility, sincerity to God and to all human beings, trust in God, Divine remembrance, inner purity, all positive traits and tendencies, consequently developing an intimate relationship with God thus receiving Divine protection and guidance in all matters of life. It is the highest level of human attainment that one strives to reach, in order to realize full human potential by completely eliminating darkness within one’s soul and consequently receiving the Divine light of wisdom in which one finds answers to all questions of life such as who I am, where have I come from, where am I heading to,

what is the purpose of life, why God created everything, and what really is true happiness and success. This is where the sincere seekers of God attain a state of God-realization or Gnosis, which is the pinnacle of spiritual achievement, resulting in total inner peace, endless happiness, and everlasting success.] God says:

أَلَمْ يَعْلَم بِأَنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَرَىٰ

"Does this person not know that God is watching him or her [at all the times in both one's outer and inner beings]." (Qur'an, Chapter 96, Verse 14)

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا

"Verily, God has full intimate knowledge of and ever watchful of you." (Qur'an, Chapter 4, Verse 1)

Abu Uthman al-Maghribi (May God have mercy upon him) said, "In the spiritual path, the most important things are contemplation, self-accountability, and politics [in terms of wise handling,] of actions by means of knowledge (i.e., managing one's actions according to correct knowledge)". He further said, "When you sit among people, then sit with admonishing the self and the heart [so they do not get deviated with wrong thoughts, feelings, words and deeds], and do not get deceived by people's visit into your gatherings [as they think of you as a spiritual teacher] because they look at your outward, while God looks into your inward (inner being)". Muhammad ibn Ali Tirmidhi (May God have mercy upon him) said, "Do your contemplation for that Being whom you are not disappeared from, have your gratitude reserved for the One whose blessings do not discontinue from you, have your relationship of obedience with the One whom you are not oblivious to, and have your humility towards One whose dominion and power you cannot avoid". One Gnostic said, "God will approve of those people who constantly guard their hearts, who take their selves to task by holding them accountable [for everything that emanates from them], and who prepare the reliance for their journey to the Hereafter". Dhun Noon al-Misri (May God have mercy upon him) was asked, "How would a servant [of God] attain Paradise?" He responded, "By means of five things: perseverance [in spiritual strivings] that does not have any deviation in it, effort that does not have any negligence in it, contemplation of God (i.e., feeling God's constant gaze upon one's heart) in public and private, waiting for one's [inevitable] death with preparation for it [by sincerely striving in the Divine path], and by accountability of the self before it is [Divinely] held accountable".

Reality of Contemplation and its Degrees

Reality of contemplation is that one takes care of the Watcher (God) and focusses one's complete attention towards Him. According to *Sufis* (spiritual travelers and strivers in

the Divine path), contemplation (*Muraqaba*) is the state of the heart that is attained by means of a type of Gnosis (Divine knowledge and proximity). Due to this state, some actions come out of the organs and some are born in the heart. The state is that the heart continuously gazes upon the Watcher (God), is indulged with Him, has inclination towards Him, and is attentive towards Him. The understanding that creates this [inner spiritual] state is the knowledge [and awareness] that God knows the secrets of the heart and its hidden matters, is ever watchful of the actions of His servants, and is aware of all actions emanating from their selves. Secrets of the heart are evident on Him just like one's outer appearance is evident to human beings, rather, it is even more evident to God than that. When this understanding becomes certitude that is devoid of all doubts, then it becomes dominant over the heart and envelopes it. This domination [of certitude] is important because there are many matters that human being has certitude for, but they do not dominate the heart, just like the knowledge of certainty of death is there but it does not dominate the heart. Hence, when deep understanding (Gnosis) dominates the heart, it inclines one into having regards for the Watcher (God) and turns the direction of one's whole being towards the Watcher. Those who have attained certitude in this Gnosis are the friends and intimates of God.

Degrees of the Intimates of God (Gnostics): There are two types of intimates of God: *Siddiq* (Gnostic) and *Ashab al-Yameen* (people of the right hand or righteousness). That's why, their contemplation is also of two degrees. One degree belongs to the intimates of God who are Gnostics (*Siddiqeen*). This is a contemplation of Divine Greatness and Majesty. The upshot of this contemplation is that the heart is immersed in the witnessing of Divine Majesty and becomes broken with His awe and there is not a slightest capacity left in it to incline towards other than Him. The actions of this contemplation remain embedded in the heart and as far as the [bodily] organs are concerned they have no inclination even towards permissible things [of pleasure and comfort], how could they incline towards forbidden and illegal (unethical and wrong) things? When organs become active in acts of Divine obedience, it seems that they have been disciplined and readied [to excel in the spiritual path]. Hence, no strategy [or effort] is needed to keep them on the right path, rather, one who owns the subjects, reforms them on one's own. Heart is the owner [of human existence], when it is immersed in the Lord, the organs tread His path without effort. However, this is not the state of every person and this state belongs to the one who has just one worry and that has saved one from all other worries by God. One who attains this degree becomes so oblivious to the creations that one cannot even see the people near one even though the eyes are open and cannot hear their talk even though one is not deaf. You will find these states in those who are replete with respect for the kings of the world (political authorities). Some royal servants are so engrossed in respecting [and serving] their kings that no matter what happens to them, they do not realize or feel anything. And this [state is] not exclusively reserved for these people, rather, those people are in the same state who are fully engrossed in a worldly task, or are immersed in a thought to the extent that some people lose their way while thinking, or deviate far away from their destination and do not remember where they were going and for what purpose they

went out. One Gnostic said, "I passed by some people who were shooting arrows [with bows as a sport]. One man was sitting [alone] at some distance from them. I advanced towards him with the intention of talking to him. He [sensing my intentions] said, 'I have greater preference for God's remembrance [than talking to you]'. I said to him, 'You are sitting alone!' He said, 'I am accompanied by my Lord and two [guardian] angels [who are responsible for recording my actions]'. I asked him, 'Who can win among the people who are shooting arrows?' He said, 'One whom God forgives'. I asked him, 'Where is the way [towards the city]?' He pointed towards the sky then got up and started walking away and said, '[O Lord!] Most of Your creations are heedless of you!'". This is the speech of the person who is immersed in witnessing God, only talks to Him, and only hears about Him. Such an individual does not need the contemplation of the tongue and of the organs because the organs move on the command of the heart.

Second degree [of contemplation] belongs to the people of scrupulousness from among the people of the right hand (righteousness). These are the people who have this certitude dominant over them that God is aware of all of their outer and inner states but witnessing the Divine Splendor and Majesty, does not intoxicate them (take them out of their sense perceptions), rather, their hearts remain at the level of moderation (sobriety with sense perceptions) and they remain inclined towards actions and states, rather, they are persistent in their actions and are not devoid of contemplation. However, shyness with God remains dominant in them and [consequently,] they neither dare to do anything without taking a pause and thinking through, nor do they hesitate doing anything [that must be done as a righteous and pious act]. Furthermore, they desist from every action that will subject them to humiliation on the Day of Judgment. They do not wait for the Day of Judgment, rather, they consider the world as the field of the Last Day and consider God to be aware of their states.

These are the different degrees of contemplation among servants (human beings) in regards to God. One who has this degree, needs keeping an eye on all of one's movements, stillness, thoughts, moments, and abilities. This watching should happen twice: first before the action, and second after the action. Before the action, one should see whether the action one is taking is done specifically for God or for following a desire from the lower self or following Satan. At this point, one should deliberate until the right thing gets revealed to one by the light of truth. If one's movement (action) is for the desires of the lower self, then one should feel shy with God and desist from that then castigate one's self for inclining towards it, think bad of that action, and condemn the attempt to humiliate oneself before God.

Third Station of Scrutinization of the Lower Self - Accountability of Self after Action: Maimun ibn Abi Muhran (May God have mercy upon him) said, "A servant [of God] is not included among the God-fearing until one does accountability of one's self, just like a businessperson does with one's business partner. In other words, both partners do accounting after conducting their business and determine profit and loss".

Hasan al-Basri (May God have mercy upon him) said, “A believer guards over one’s self and does its accountability for the sake of God. The burden of accountability [on the Day of Judgment] will be light on those who complete the accountability of their selves in the world and it will be intense for those who do not do this”. After that, he explained self-accountability as, “A believer likes something and says, ‘I like you and find you beneficial, however, there is a barrier (deliberation and accountability) standing between you and me’. This accountability is done before action. Sometimes, believer makes a mistake, then one returns to one’s self and asks, ‘What was your intention with this action (or act) [of yours]? By God! No excuse will be accepted from you and if God wills, I will never repeat this [mistake again]’”. He further said in explaining the below verse:

وَلَآ أُقۡسِمُ بِٱلنَّفۡسِ ٱللَّوَّامَةِ

“‘By the self that reproaches itself!’ (Qur’an, Chapter 75, Verse 2)

A believer reproaches [and castigates] one’s self asking, ‘What was your intention with these words? What was your intention when you ate this? What was your purpose with this drink?’ A wrongdoing person on the other hand, goes ahead [with everything one likes irrespectively] and does not reproach the self in any matter [and does whatever one wants whether it is right or wrong, beneficial or injurious, legal or illegal]”. Malik bin Dinar (May God have mercy upon him) said, “May God have mercy upon His servant (human being) who says this to one’s self, ‘Have you not made such-and-such mistake? Have you not committed such-and-such offence?’, then upbraids it and puts a leash on it and makes is subjected to the Divine book and makes it its guide”. This is also a way of castigating the self.

Fourth Station of Scrutinization of the Lower Self - Punishing the Self after Committing Wrong: When a servant [of God] holds one’s self accountable, and sees that it has not escaped from committing sins (wrongs) and has not fully fulfilled God’s rights, and that one should not leave it alone in that state because if one leaves it in that state, committing sins (wrongs) will becomes easier for it and self will become accustomed to sins to the extent that it will become very difficult to stay away from them. This is [tantamount to] complete destruction that self develops the habit of sins. Hence, it is necessary to punish it [for its offence]. For instance, if one eats a doubtful morsel [of food whose permissibility is questionable or is outright forbidden] with lust, then its (the self's) punishment is to stay hungry. If one looks at someone or something that is not permissible to look at then one should punish the eye by not looking at anything. By similarly punishing all bodily organs for their offences, one should stop them from their lusts. This was the methodology of spiritual travelers journeying towards the Hereafter. Hassan ibn Abi Sinan (May God have mercy upon him) passed by a new building and ended up asking [someone], “When was it made?” After that, he

turned his attention towards his self and said to it, "You have asked a useless question. I will sentence you with one year of fasting!" Hence, he fasted [daily from dawn to dusk] for one full year. Malik ibn Dhaigham (May God have mercy upon him) said, "Rabah al-Qaisi (May God have mercy upon him) came to us after *Asr* (late afternoon before sunset) prayers and inquired about our father. We told him that he is sleeping. Upon hearing this he said, 'Is this time to sleep? Why is he sleeping at this time?' He said this and left. We rushed a man after him to tell him that we will wake our father up if he wants. The man came back and said, 'He (Rabah al-Qaisi) was so engrossed in some thought that he did not even hear what I said [but I still followed him to convey the message]. I saw that he went to a graveyard (cemetery) and started upbraiding his self and said, 'Why did you say that he is sleeping at this time? Was it obligatory upon you to say that? One can sleep whenever one wants. Who are you to question that? What do you know if this is the time to sleep or not? You opened your mouth about a matter that you are not well familiar with. You have made a horrible mistake and I will surely punish you for this and that punishment is that I will not have my back touch the floor to sleep except when illness befalls me or I lose my mind. Woe be to you! Are you not ashamed? Till when will you scold people and remain negligent of your own misguidance?' He started to weep after saying this. He did not even see (notice) me. I left him in that state and have returned back'".

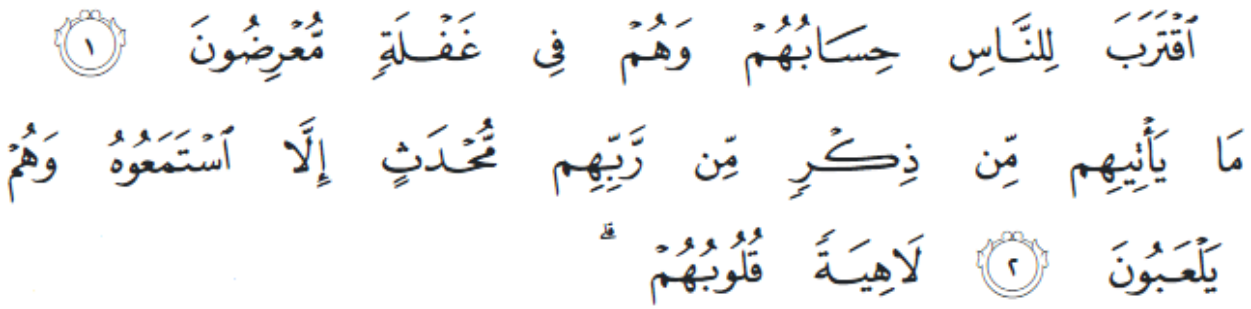
Wahab ibn Munabbeh (May God have mercy upon him) said that there was a person who was worshipping God for a long time, had a need from God. He did spiritual struggle for seventy weeks in such a way that he only ate seven dried dates in a week and worshipped God day and night. After seventy weeks, he prayed to God for his need, but it was not [Divinely] fulfilled. He then [realized the reality of the matter and] said to his self, "If there was any good in you then your supplication would have surely been accepted". At that time, an angel came [to him in human form] and said to him, "O son of Adam! This moment [of realization and your upbraiding of the self for its faults] of yours is better than all your past worship. God has [now] fulfilled your need [as a result of this realization and putting the onus where it belonged]". Abu Talha (May God be pleased with him) while praying [in his orchard in Medina] started to think about a bird [after hearing its beautiful chirp]. After completing his prayer, he gave away his orchard in charity as an expiation for his fault [of his own accord]. Sensible and far-sighted people used to punish their selves like this [for its offences, evils, and wrongdoings]. It is surprising that people punish others for their faults and wrongdoings and think that if they forgive them, they will become rebellious and out of control, but on the other hand, you have left the self [in you] to its whims, although it is your worst enemy and its rebelliousness is much more, and the damage done by its rebelliousness is far greater. Other people can at the most, create troubles in your worldly life, while your self is the destroyer of your [eternal life of the] Hereafter. If you are endowed with the wealth of intellect then you know this very well that there is no [real] life other than the [eternal] life

of the Hereafter, it has everlasting and eternal blessings, and [your own] self is the destroyer of this life, that's why, it is more deserving of punishment.

Fifth Station of Scrutinization of the Lower Self - Spiritual Struggle: Spiritual Struggle (*Mujahada*) is that when you do accountability of your own self and see that the self has committed any sin (wrongdoing) then hand it those punishments that have been mentioned before. If you see that the self is being lazy in doing spiritual routines (*Awrad* and *Waza'if* - Divine remembrance, invocations, supererogatory prayers, recitation of the Divine book, studying the wisdom and teachings of intimates of God, other acts of worship and devotions) then burden it with more spiritual works and make it committed to other litanies and invocations (*Awrad*) to compensate for the past misses and losses. Those who strived for the sake of God used to do that. As far as the question remains that your self does not obey you or does not agree with regularly performing litanies, invocations, and spiritual strivings, then what is the way of curing it? Its answer is that you teach it those traditions that narrate the excellence of those who strive spiritually, and the most beneficial cure is to adopt the company of a servant of God from among His servants who works hard in worship, listen to such a one carefully and act upon them, observe the actions of such a one and follow them.

Sixth Station of Scrutinization of the Lower Self - castigating the Self: Your greatest enemy is within you and that is the self. It has been [Divinely] written in its creation and in its inherent nature that it commands evil, inclines towards evil, and escapes from goodness. It has been [Divinely] commanded to [reform and] purify it, to remove its crookedness, and to prevent it from oppression and revulsive things. If you loosen its leash, it will become rebellious and will get out of control, then you will not be able to get to it. If you keep scolding it and make it fear God's retribution then the same self becomes a self that reproaches itself (*Nafs al-Lawwama*) [when it commits wrongs, excesses, and evils] that God has sworn by. It can be hoped that [by means of the gradual process of reformation and transformation], this self [that reproaches itself will evolve further and] will become the self that is at peace (*Nafs al-Mutma'inna*) that has been Divinely commanded to be included in the category of sincere servants of God in a way that God is pleased with it and it is pleased with God. [These are all the stages of evolution and transformation of the self from a rebellious entity into an entity that God is pleased with, after its transformation with spiritual strivings as mentioned before.] Hence, do not be negligent of the self at any moment, instead, reason with it, advise it, and upbraid it. You should not admonish and preach to others unless and until you have admonished and preached to your own self. God sent a Divine revelation to Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him), "O son of Mary! First advise your own self and when you are done with it, only then advise people, otherwise feel shy with Me".

Its method is that, you should pay attention to your own self and say to it, "How imbecile and foolish you are that you think or yourself as intelligent, prudent and wise but do not plan anything about the upcoming [eternal] life. Paradise and Hell are in front of you (facing you) and soon, you will be going to one of them. Despite that, you become happy, laugh loudly, indulge in futile endeavors, although, you will soon encounter a dangerous phase (end of the worldly existence). Death awaits you; it is possible that it entraps you in its clutches today or tomorrow. You think that death is far away from you, but it is possible that it is very near in God's knowledge. Do you not know that death will catch you suddenly? Neither a messenger will come nor will any [advance] information. Neither will there be an appointment on a specific date and time nor is there a specific season for the arrival of death. Neither it is restricted to night or day, nor is it specific to youth or old age. Rather, every breath of the human being can be the last and every moment can be a harbinger of death. If death does not come all of a sudden then an illness occurs all of a sudden that leads one to death. Then what is the matter with you that you do not prepare for the [inevitable] death, although it is closer to you than your jugular vein? Do you not ponder over these words of God?



'The time of accountability of people have come but they are still indulged in negligence and are oblivious to it. The fresh advice that comes to them from their Lord, they listen to it in such a way that they ridicule it and their hearts are not [even] inclined towards it.' (Qur'an, Chapter 21, Verses 1-3)

If you (O self!) dare to sin against God because of your belief that God is not watching over your actions then this is your disbelief (*Kufr*), and if you commit sin even after considering Him a watcher over your actions then it a matter of great shame and disgrace for you! O self! If a servant or a [younger] sibling of yours disobeys you then how angry do you get and how bad do you consider it? Then how dare you are ready to face God's displeasure and punishment? Do you think that you can deal with Divine punishment? Absolutely not! This is your misunderstanding. If you don't believe what we (Ghazali) say then experience it yourself, and stand in the scorching sun for a short while or close yourself in a hot public bath for some time or put your finger over a flame of fire and see if you have the power to endure this pain. Are you deceived by your belief of being entitled to Divine Grace [irrespective of what you do in terms of evils] or your belief that God is not in need of your worship? If what we are thinking is right then we ask you that why do you not rely [just] on Divine Grace in worldly matters and why do you come up with personal strategies [and plans and efforts to achieve your worldly

goals]? When you have a worldly need that is not possible without money, you do everything you can to get the money you need. We ask you why do you not rely on Divine Grace at that time that He grants you the information of some [hidden] treasure or subjugate one of His servants for your help who would provide you with the needed thing without any efforts on your part? Do you think that God is kind and generous only in the Hereafter but not in this world? You know this well that there is no change in God's way [in terms of differences in His conduct between this world and the Hereafter] and the owner of the world and the Hereafter is One. You also know that human being gets nothing without making an effort. O accused self! Your hypocrisy is baffling, and your false claims are surprising! You claim faith with your tongue, but the influence of hypocrisy is evident on you! Now you are engrossed in seeking the world like a dog busy with chewing a bone, totally oblivious to its surrounding environment, being totally neglectful of the Hereafter with a deceitful pride, and ignoring the [mighty] events after [the inevitable] death as insignificant. This is not a sign (indication) of faith. It seems that you do not have faith in the Day of Judgment, and you think that you will get liberated from all imprisonments and hardships after death. This conjecture of yours is wrong. God said:

أَيَحْسَبُ ٱلْإِنسَٰنُ أَن يُتْرَكَ سُدًى ﴿٣٦﴾

أَلَمْ يَكُ نُطْفَةً مِّن مَّنِىٍّ يُمْنَىٰ ﴿٣٧﴾ ثُمَّ كَانَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقَ فَسَوَّىٰ ﴿٣٨﴾ فَجَعَلَ مِنْهُ

ٱلزَّوْجَيْنِ ٱلذَّكَرَ وَٱلْأُنثَىٰٓ ﴿٣٩﴾ أَلَيْسَ ذَٰلِكَ بِقَٰدِرٍ عَلَىٰٓ أَن يُحْۦِۦَ ٱلْمَوْتَىٰ ﴿٤٠﴾

'Does human being thinks that one will be left alone [without being held accountable for one's actions in the world]? Was this person not just a drop of sperm [in the womb] that later become a piece of congealed blood [in the womb]. Then God made it [into a human being] then formed the organs then made it into two types: man and woman. Is God [then] not capable of resurrecting the dead [on the Day of Judgment]?' (Qur'an, Chapter 75, Verses 36-40)

If you think that you will be left alone untouched then this is your ignorance and disbelief. Think about yourself whether you were always like the way you are now currently? What was your reality? You were just a sperm drop! You got your existence from that [sperm drop]. Then is it impossible for God to give you life [again on the Day of Judgment] after death? If you believe in the life after death, then why don't you prepare for it? We get a shock surprise when we see that if a child tells you that there is a scorpion in your clothes then you take out and throw away your clothes right at that moment and you do not ask for any proofs or seek any arguments. Do the sayings of the prophets, scholars, wise and Gnostics not even have this much importance that the saying of the child [about scorpion in your clothes] has in your eyes, whom all the people of the world term as inexperienced and lacking full intellect? Is this intelligence and can this be termed as the behavior of a sensible human being? We say this to the

extent that if your state is revealed to animals then they will ridicule you and will mourn your intellect and perception!

O unfortunate self! If you believe in all these things and consider them true then why do you prevaricate in acting upon them although death is lying in ambush? It is possible that it snatches you without giving you an opportunity for repentance. If you have certitude about death and know that it can come suddenly then why are you sitting idle with hand upon hand (doing nothing)? If we accept that God has given you respite in the form of hundred years of life, can this hundred-years long duration be completed without struggle and will anything get done automatically without actually doing it? If suppose we accept that spiritual strivings and efforts are beneficial in the last part of life [in the old age] that leads one to high spiritual degrees, then how do we know that you will have life remaining to accomplish that? We think that you do not want to desist from lusts, and you find hardships in stopping yourself from lust. If you are waiting for a day when opposing the lust will not be painful then such a day will not come. God has neither created such a day nor will He create one. Paradise is surrounded with unpleasant and disliked things, hardships and sufferings and these things are not easy on the selves.

O self! You have been postponing [your pious] deeds to tomorrow. How many tomorrows have already come and converted into todays, but you did not move a bit [towards doing something about preparing for the eternal life] and are still busy with the promise for tomorrow? We don't think that you can act in any tomorrow, rather you are incapable of doing any [righteous] deeds because lust is like a tree whose roots get stronger every day. When it is uprooted and thrown away while it is just a [small] plant or a weak tree then there is no difficulty in that. But when it becomes a huge tree and its roots spread out in the soil and its branches go wide and high up towards the sky then it is no longer easy to uproot it. It is just like a young person who intends to uproot a tree then keeps postposing it every day to tomorrow until one becomes old and when one tries to uproot the tree in old age, one is incapable of doing that. Firstly, because one has become old, and secondly because the tree has become firmly rooted in the land. It is known from this that the tree you could not uproot in your youth, you will not be able to uproot in your old age. Reality is that, the spiritual struggle of the old age is a tremendous hardship. O self! If you cannot understand these clear matters and make prevarication (postponement) your habit, then why do you consider yourself as wise? What could be a bigger foolishness then not understanding the matters that are lucidly clear? Perhaps you will say, 'I cannot persist with righteous deeds because I have the greed for the pleasures of the lusts and being patient with hardships and sufferings is very difficult for me'. This saying of yours is highly foolish. If you have greed for lusts and pleasures, then why don't you search for those lusts and pleasures that will stay forever and ever, and [furthermore] they are devoid of all impurities and muddiness? But these lusts are found in the Paradise and not in the world and the way to attain them is to ignore the lusts of the world, otherwise, sometimes, one needs to get deprived of many morsels due to one [dubious] morsel. No matter how long of a life

one gets, the life of this world is limited compared to the unlimited eternal life of the Hereafter.

If there is any refuge for you, it is the refuge in God. If there is any path to salvation, then it is the one that goes towards God. He is your only refuge and savior. He is the only one who can fulfil your purpose, and He is the one who can respond to your entreaties. Bow your head before Him, have humility and lowliness before Him. To the extent you have ignorance and to the extent you have sins [and wrongdoings], to that extent weep before Him because the person who weeps before Him and humbles before Him, is the one He endows His mercy upon. He helps the one who begs for help [from Him], He accepts the supplication of the compelled and needy. Today you are compelled towards Him [by your straitened circumstances and life challenges] and have become needy of His mercy. All other ways have become blocked and all other paths have become narrowed. Castigating your self is also not effective. The One you ask from is kind and merciful. His mercy possesses limitless expansiveness. His generosity is never-ending, and His forgiveness is all-encompassing. Now spread your both hands and say [by way of supplication], 'O Most Merciful of the merciful! O Compassionate! O Tolerant! O Majestic! O Kind! I am a sinner, a doer of evil deeds, a doer of mistakes. My rebelliousness has exceeded all bounds and I am daring in sins to the extent of shamelessness. O God! After being despaired from everywhere, I am present in Your court weeping with humility, lowliness, neediness, and poverty before you. Please rush Your help towards me, remove my hardship, show me the indications of Your mercy, grant me Your forgiveness, and grant me the strength of Your protection!' O self! Follow your father Adam (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) in weeping and expressing your shame and regret [to God]".

This is the method of taking the self to task that pious predecessors followed. The purpose of their entreaties to God was to win Divine acceptance and the purpose of taking self to task was to warn the self. One who is negligent of entreaties to God and of taking the self to task is not being a helper of the self, and the Divine displeasure over it will also become clear soon [usually in the form of straitened circumstances and imposing unbearable challenges in life].

Chapter 19 – Deep Inner Reflection and Deliberations are Imperatives for Inner Peace and Spiritual Transformation

Reflection is yet another essential spiritual quality that leads to self-awareness and inner peace. Reflection and contemplation in the known, opens new vistas of awareness of the unknown, thus developing new insights into matters. Spiritual matters become clear in the state of reflection with the dawning of the truth. Reflection fosters deep inner awareness, knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. Its positive implications in human relations cannot be under-estimated as a person of reflection is a conscientious person, who deliberates before every step and is mindful of not causing harm to anyone. Ghazali's marvelous exposition on the subject is provided here in condensed form from the ninth book in the fourth volume of his *magnum opus* "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God" as follows [25]:

Deep Inner Reflection (*Tafakkur*) and Deliberations (*Tadabbur*)

It is narrated in a tradition of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) that deep inner reflection and deliberation for a moment is superior to an entire year of worship. God has greatly emphasized *Fikr* (deep inner reflection or to think on a subject deeply, systematically, and in great detail as it is a light of the heart, nourishment for the soul, and essence of knowledge illuminating the path of spiritual transformation and ascendance), *Tadabbur* (deliberations or looking deeply into matters to reach the truth), witnessing, and certitude. Let it be clear that reflection is the key to [spiritual] illuminations, starting point of inner insight (*Baseerah*), a net to capture knowledge, and a means to hunt spiritual gems (*Ma'arif*) and deep inner meanings (*Ma'ani*). People generally don't know how to reflect, in what matters to reflect, why do they reflect, what is sought from reflection, is it sought in itself or is it an objective for some outcome? If it is needed for an outcome, then what is that outcome - whether they are knowledges or inner [spiritual] states or both. Elucidating all these facts is an expedition. We will first explain the reality of deliberation then we will talk about its outcome then we will shed light on matters that are subject to reflection.

Excellence of Reflection: God has commanded deliberation and reflection at many places in His book and has praised the people of reflection. He said:

ٱلَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ ٱللَّهَ قِيَـٰمًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِى خَلْقِ

ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلۡأَرۡضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقۡتَ هَٰذَا بَٰطِلٗا

"They are those who remember God while standing, sitting, lying, and they deliberate in the creation of the heavens and the earth [and when they attain the fruits of this reflection, they say with conviction and certitude], 'O our Lord! You have not created any of that in vain [instead, there is a mighty purpose and Divine wisdom behind everything that exists after its creation].'" (Qur'an, Chapter 3, Verse 191)

Abdullah bin Abbas (May God be pleased with him) said that some people were reflecting about [the Being of] God. He told them, "Reflect on the creations of God because you are not capable of coming up with correct estimation about God". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Abu Na'eem fi al-Hilya*)

Obaid ibn Umair (May God have mercy upon him) asked Aisha (May God be pleased with her) [the wife of the Prophet], "Please tell me about the strangest thing about Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him)". Aisha (May God be pleased with her) started to weep upon hearing this and said, "Everything about him was strange! One night he came to me until my body touched his, then he said, 'O Aisha! Leave me so I can worship my Lord'. After that he performed ablution with water contained in a leather bag, then stood up in prayer and wept so much that his beard became wet [with tears]. After that he wept in prostration until the ground [where he prostrated during prayer] became wet. Then [after completing prayers] he lied on his side [to get some rest] until Bilal (May God be pleased with him) came [to his door] to inform him about early morning (after dawn but before sunrise) prayer. He asked, 'O Messenger of God! Why do you weep? God has forgiven all your past and future sins'. He replied, 'O Bilal! Why should I not weep? Tonight, God has revealed this verse to me [by means of Divine revelation]:

إِنَّ فِي خَلۡقِ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلۡأَرۡضِ وَٱخۡتِلَٰفِ ٱلَّيۡلِ وَٱلنَّهَارِ لَأٓيَٰتٖ لِّأُوْلِي ٱلۡأَلۡبَٰبِ

Verily, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of the night and the day, there are signs (proofs) for the people of intellect.' (Qur'an, Chapter 3, Verse 190)

He then said, 'There is great loss for the person who reads this verse but does not reflect on it'". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Sahih ibn Habban* on the authority of Rabah [May God be pleased with him])

Fudhail ibn Ayadh (May God have mercy upon him) said, "Reflection is a mirror in which you see your pious and evil deeds". Ibrahim (May God have mercy upon him) was asked, "You ponder and reflect a lot". He responded, "Contemplation is the core of the intellect". Sufyan ibn 'Ayeniyah used to say, "If human being has reflection, then one can derive lessons from everything". Tawus (May God have mercy upon him) said, "The disciples of Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) asked him, 'O spirit of God! Is there anyone on earth like you today?' He replied, 'Yes. That person is like

me whose speech is Divine remembrance, whose silence is reflection, and whose sight is deriving lessons (*'Ibrah*) [from what one sees]'". Bashar (May God have mercy upon him) said, "If people reflect on the splendors of God, they will never commit disobedience to God". Hasan al-Basri (May God have mercy upon him) said, "People of intellect become accustomed to reflection by means of Divine remembrance, and to Divine remembrance by means of reflection until wisdom emanates from their hearts". Junaid (May God have mercy upon him) said, "The most excellent and superior gathering is the one in which the horses of reflection, gallop in the field of Divine Oneness (*Tawheed*), breezes of Divine Gnosis are enjoyed, the wine of love is drunk from the ocean of Divine love, and a glance of good opinion (*Husn al-Dhun*) is cast upon God". Imam Shafa'i said, "Looking at matters correctly saves one from mistake, firmness in opinion [based on facts] saves one from regret, reflection and deliberation shows the wisdom and caution [of the one who employs them], consultations with intelligent folks fosters perseverance and firm insight, hence, reflect before resolving [to do something], deliberate before doing, and consult before accomplishing".

Reality of Reflection and its Fruits: The meaning of reflection is that two understandings are present in the heart so that they engender a third understanding. The example of it is that one who prefers the worldly life, wants to have the understanding that adopting the Hereafter is better than adopting the world (getting completely immersed in the worldly life), then there are four methods of attaining that understanding. Firstly, it is to hear from someone else that preferring the Hereafter is better than preferring the world, to follow such a one, and ascertain it without understanding the reality of it, and by means of one's actions, merely have confidence in the person saying this and [consequently,] become inclined towards the Hereafter. This is termed as "following" (*Taqleed*) and not "understanding" (*Ma'rifa*). Second method is that one should know that it is better to prefer the thing that will remain (enduring), and then know that Hereafter will remain [forever]. With these two understandings, the third understanding that will be attained is that preferring the Hereafter is better. This [third] understanding is not possible without the first two and to present these two [understandings] in the heart to engender a third one is referred to as "reflection", belief, pause [to ponder], and deliberation. As far as deliberation, pause and reflections are concerned, these are different words implying the same meaning. The benefit of reflection is that it increases the knowledge and imparts the understanding that did not previously exist. When points of knowledge and wisdom gather in the heart and come together in a certain order then that engenders a new understanding. In other words, one understanding is a fruit or outcome of another understanding, and when the new understanding combines with a different [previous] understanding then yet another new understanding is born out of it. These outcomes and fruits, knowledges, understandings, and reflections, increase in this manner until death puts an end to it or certain impediments come up that block this path. This method is beneficial for someone who attains benefits from knowledge and is familiar with the way of reflection. Most people are bereft of the abundance of knowledge because they do not have the capital, in other words, they do not have those

understandings that beget other [new] understandings. The parable of this is of a person who does not have business goods and [consequently,] remains deprived of attaining profits. Some people have the capital of understandings, but they are neither familiar with their correct usage nor do they know how to put them in correct order to foster other understandings. Hence, they are not able to increase their capital [thus causing it to stagnate]. The method of using this capital and using it to deduce one understanding from another is revealed naturally in the heart by means of Divine illumination as it was revealed to the prophets, but this has become rare nowadays. [The correct method of using the capital of understandings] Sometimes comes about by practice and learning and, this is the most common way now. Sometimes it happens that the person reflecting, possesses understandings and also the outcomes and fruits of those understandings, but does not know the feeling of attaining it nor does one know the way of expressing it to others because one is bereft of the ability to express.

Fruits and Outcomes of Reflection: Summary of this discussion is that the meaning of reflection is to bring into the heart two understandings in order to attain a third. Fruits (outcomes) of contemplation can be knowledges, inner states, or [good, noble, and righteous] actions, or all three. However, its special outcome is only knowledge. Surely, when knowledge is attained by the heart, the state of heart changes, and when the state of the heart changes, the actions emanating from the [bodily] organs also change, as if action is subservient to the [inner] state, and state is subservient to knowledge, and knowledge is subservient to reflection, and reflection is the origin of all that is good and their key [that unlocks them]. This proves the excellence of reflection and it is also known from this that reflection is superior to Divine remembrance because reflection has Divine remembrance [inherent] in it along with something additional. However, Divine remembrance of the heart [as opposed to just the tongue] is better than the actions of the limbs. Nevertheless, reflection is superior to all actions, hence, it has been said that a moment of reflection is superior to an entire year of worship. Some people of wisdom say that a person of reflection is the one who transfers (moves) the heart from reprehensible things (qualities and character traits) to praiseworthy things (qualities and character traits), and turns it around from greed to abstinence [from worldliness] and contentment. Some say that contemplation refers to witnessing [the Divine with the eye of the heart] (*Mushahada*) and pious awe, reverence, and fear of God (*Taqwa*).

If you want to know the condition of the change of state by means of reflection, then its example is the same as the one mentioned before, regarding the Hereafter. It is learned from pondering over that example that it is better to prefer the Hereafter. When this understanding becomes firmly ingrained in our hearts with certainty, then they themselves become inclined towards the love of the Hereafter and towards abstinence [from worldliness] in the world. We have construed this inclination with [inner spiritual] state. Before this understanding, the state of the heart was such that it liked the transient and ephemeral (world) and was inclined towards it and was disenchanted with the Hereafter and had little propensity towards it. However, when this understanding

was attained, the condition of the heart changed completely, a transformation happened in its intention and in its inclination. Then transformation in intention compelled the organs to set the world aside and get inclined towards the actions of the Hereafter.

Five Degrees of Reflection

There are five degrees of reflection - first is bringing together, in other words, to bring together two understandings [from before] into the heart; second is reflection which is to attain a new understanding that is the objective, from the first two understandings; third degree is to attain the sought after understanding and to illumine the heart with that; fourth degree is that the heart changes and transforms from its previous state after receiving illumination of understanding; and fifth degree is that the [bodily] organs serve the heart according to its transformed state. Just like hitting a stone against iron produces fire that illuminates a dark place with its light and eye starts to see it while it previously did not see it and organs wake up for action, same is the state of the fire stones of the illumination of understanding. The name of this fire stone is reflection that combines two understandings, just like the combination of fire and stone and a specific combination is used between the two, and just like iron is hit with a stone in a specific way creating the light of understanding. Just like fire is produced from iron and heart is transformed with its illumination and gets inclined towards the direction it was not previously inclined towards, and in the light of this fire, eye is able to see things it was previously not able to see.

Nevertheless, the fruits of reflections are both knowledge and state. There is neither any limit to knowledge nor is there a limit for [inner spiritual] states that descend on the hearts. That's why, if a spiritual traveler wants to encompass those matters where there is room for reflection then it will not be possible to do so because there are innumerable occasions for reflection and there are no limits to its fruits. However, it will be our attempt to briefly capture all those occasions in writing that are related to the strivings in the Divine path (*Deen*) so that we become informed about the occasions of reflection.

Occasions or Pathways of Reflection: Let it be known that reflection sometimes happens in a matter that is related to the Divine path (*Deen*) and sometimes in a matter not connected to the Divine path. Our concern here is matters related to the Divine path, hence we disregard other matters here. Divine path refers to the matter that is between the servant and the Lord. All reflections of a servant [of God] are related to either one's own inner qualities or inner states or they are about God or His Divine attributes and actions. Those who are traversing the path to God and are desirous of meeting with Him, their state resembles more with the state of lovers. Let's suppose a true lover and say that a person who is fully submerged in love, the reflection of such a person is either related to the beloved or to one's own self. If one reflects on the beloved, one either reflects on beloved's beauty, or in beloved's being so that one can

derive pleasure from that reflection, or reflect on those qualities that are considered beloved's goodness and perfection so that the pleasure of reflection increases even more. If one reflects on one's self then it is not devoid of two states: one either reflects on those [personal] qualities that are not good near the beloved and that humiliate and degrade one in the eyes of the beloved, or one reflects on those qualities that are liked by the beloved that draw one closer to the beloved. To contemplate on any matter other than these, is excluded from love and is a cause of loss because a true lover is the one who remains wholly immersed in the love of the beloved, to the extent that there is no room left in one's heart for any other thought or reflection. A lover of God should also be like this and one's sight and reflection should not exceed the Beloved.

First Type of Reflection - Related to the Self: As long as the reflection of servant [of God, i.e., human being] remains focused on four types mentioned above (all human reflections are related to either one's own inner qualities or states or they are about God or His Divine attributes and actions), one does not get separated from the objective of [Divine] love. Now we will examine all four types separately. Let's look at the first type related to reflecting on your own self's states and qualities (inner character traits) so you can discern between good and bad. Then all matters that are liked or disliked by God, are of two types: outer acts such as acts of [Divine] obedience and sins, and inner acts such as salvific inner qualities or destructive inner qualities (character traits of the heart). The center of all of these inner qualities is the heart. Among the acts of obedience and sins, there are some that are related to the seven organs and some are related to the entire body like disobeying the parents or living at an impermissible place. Things that God dislikes should be reflected upon in three ways: firstly, does God likes these things or not? Sometimes the revulsion of something [bad] is not immediately apparent and one needs to look at things minutely (deeply). Secondly, one should reflect that if these matters are disliked by God, then what is the way of avoiding them? And thirdly, one should reflect that the disliked quality one possesses now, how should one leave it, or desists from having it if one is going to have it in future, or one had it in the past and needs to reflect on how to compensate (expiate) for it. In a similar manner, one should reflect on beloved things in these three ways. [In summary,] We have contained this [first] type [of reflection related to the self] into four kinds: acts of obedience, sins, destructive qualities, and salvific qualities. We will explain every kind with an example so that the spiritual travelers can deduce all other types from this so that the door of reflections gets opened for one into a wide expansive field.

First Kind - Sins: Every morning, human being should hold accountability of the seven organs in detail and of the rest of the body in general. If they are involved in sin, one should abandon it; if involved in sin yesterday, one should compensate for it [by means of expiation]; and if one is going to involve in it tomorrow, one should prepare to prevent it and stay away from it. For example, one should examine [the actions of] the tongue and imagine that it is constantly engaged in backbiting, lies, self-aggrandizement (self-importance, self-promotion, and self-projection that are all the ingredients of pride, arrogance, egoism and self-righteousness), ridiculing others, cutting off people's

conversations, calling others bad, and interfering in useless matters. First of all, one should firmly ingrain this is one's heart that God intensely dislikes these things, then deliberate on the Qur'anic verses and prophetic narrations that forewarn about Divine retribution [against these evils and wrongs], then see that one is about to become deserving of Divine retribution due to one's own sins [and hence, has no one to blame but oneself]. Afterwards, one should reflect on how to save oneself from these sins and know that there is no way of safeguarding against these sins other than adopting solitude and adopting the company of such a pious and God-fearing person who takes one to task for every speech that is disliked by God.

Similarly, one should reflect about the ears that by its means, backbiting, lies, useless talk, vulgar speech, and innovations (*Bid'a* or deviations from authentic tradition) in Divine path (*Deen*) are heard. These talks are very common and could be heard from anyone, hence, one should protect oneself from them either by solitude or by admonishing the right and exhorting against wrong [with wisdom, gentleness, and beauty as these are the essentials for getting the right point across rightly as opposed to harshness that makes matters worse]. Reflect on the stomach that its sin is in eating and drinking. Sometimes it is because of eating more, even though it is permissible food because God does not like gluttony, it increases the lust, which is the weapon of God's enemy Satan, and sometimes it commits sin by eating forbidden and doubtful things. Before eating, one should see where the food is coming from [whether it is coming from pure and legal means or from impure and illegal means]. Then this is not specific only to food, but one should reflect on the dress and residence to see if these have become available to one by legal means or through forbidden or doubtful means. One should also reflect on sources of income to see whether they are legal or not. If they are illegal [or unethical like fraud, theft, deceit and robbery] then one should reflect on legal means of earning income and see how one can stay away from forbidden (*Haram*) matters and convince one's self that all [Divine] worships get wasted by eating forbidden things [or using illegal income for one's benefit] as the foundation of worship is eating permissible food [or earning livelihood from permissible and legal means]. One should reflect on all organs in a similar manner. What has been explained here is sufficient. It is hoped that one who attains correct and real understanding of these states by means of reflection, will keep a watch over these organs all day and this surveillance will protect the organs from sins.

Second Kind - Acts of Obedience: A seeker of God or a spiritual traveler (*Salik*) should reflect on those actions that have been made obligatory upon one, in other words, one should see how to perform them, how to protect them from faults and shortcomings, and if any faults happen in them, how can one compensate for that by means of supererogatory acts of worship (*Nawafil*), and think about all the organs and what acts are liked by God from them. For example, one should think that eye has been created to learn lessons from what it sees, to witness the Divine splendors of the heavens and the earth, and to study the Book of God and the words of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him). One should examine all the

organs, one's physical being, possessions, wealth, servants, children, etc., in a similar manner because all these things are the instruments by means of which, one can obey God. By means of one's deep reflection, one should find ways of Divine obedience [servitude and devotion] then search for those matters then incline oneself towards Divine worship. One should then reflect on sincerity of intention so that the [righteous] action is pure and clean in every way.

Third Kind - Destructive Qualities: Third kind includes those dangerous qualities (inner character traits, temperaments, and dispositions) that are centered in the heart. These include domination of lust and greed, anger, stinginess, arrogance, self-righteousness, ostentation, jealousy, harboring ill thoughts about others, negligence, pride, etc. One should examine one's heart to see if these [reprehensible and negative traits] are found in the heart or not. If one thinks that the heart is cleansed of these qualities, then one should think about the method of testing the heart and search for those indications that ascertain that assessment. If one's self is a claimant of humility and exemption from arrogance then one should go to the bazaar and put a pack of firewood on one's head (a sign of humility and humbleness in old times) to test out its humility. In previous times, people [striving in the spiritual path] used to test their selves like that. The purpose of this reflection is to see [for oneself] if the heart is associated with these undesirable qualities or not. If indications reveal the presence of these [reprehensible inner] qualities then one should reflect on matters that will make these qualities look bad to oneself and it becomes clear to one that the fountainhead of these qualities are ignorance, heedlessness, and inner evil. If one has the realization of arrogance in one's self, one should inform the self of its foolishness and explain to it that, "You consider your self (*Nafs*) as big [in dignity and honor], rather, big is the one who is big in the sight of God and this will be known only after death as to which person is big [in dignity and honor] in the sight of God". When it is known that arrogance is fatal and its origin is foolishness, then one should reflect on its cure and adopt this strategy for its cure that one adopts the ways of humble people. Similarly, if one has the greed and lust for food in the self, then one should think that this is the quality (characteristic) of beasts. If there had been any perfection [goodness and excellence] in the lust for food or lust for copulation, then it would have been the attribute of God and angels like knowledge and ability, and animals would not have been endowed with this quality. To the extent this lust is dominant over one, to that extent one will resemble animals and will be distanced from the angels that are close to God.

Fourth Kind - Salvific Qualities: Salvific qualities (sublime inner character traits, temperaments, and dispositions centered in the heart) are repentance, regret and shame over sins, patience in adversities, gratitude over blessings, God-fear, hope, abstinence in the world, sincerity, truthfulness in Divine obedience, love of God and honoring Him, acceptance of Divine actions, longing for the Divine, humility, humbleness, etc. A servant [of God, i.e., human being] should look at one's heart every day and see which quality from among the qualities, that draw one nearer to God, are needed. If it is learned that one needs a specific quality then one should think that

these qualities are [inner] states and states are the fruits (outcomes) of knowledges, and knowledges [and understandings] are the fruits of reflections. Therefore, if one intends to have the states of repentance and regret [for one's own wrongdoings] for one's self, then one needs to first examine all of one's sins, reflect upon them, combine them all together on one's self, and consider them big in one's heart. One should then cast a glance at the reprehension that has come in the Divine law regarding sins, and have this certitude in the heart that one is about to earn God's displeasure [due to their continued presence and persistence in them]. One continues with this reflection until the state of shame and regret emerges in the heart. Similarly, if one wants to attain the state of gratitude [in the heart], one should first study (look deeply into) God's blessings and bounties and think that He has put His beautiful cover over one's sins [so that one's sordid state is not put on display for the public to see, and this realization effuses one with Divine gratitude]. When one wants to develop the state of Divine love and longing for God then one should reflect on the Divine Beauty and Majesty, and in God's greatness and exaltedness. The way to do this is to first look at wonderous wisdom of God [that is evident around us in our states, lives, creations, nature, and in everything around us and in our inner beings] and look at His beautiful Divine qualities (attributes), then deliberate on His Majesty and Beauty. If state of God-fear is desired then one should first look at one's inner and outer sins then reflect on one's death, and the events and views one will encounter after death [that have been explicitly spelled out in great details in prophetic traditions], for example, before death, one has to deal with the throes of death, one has to deal with the questioning of angels (*Munkir Nakeer*) that visit one after death, the punishment of the grave, one should reflect on encountering its snakes, scorpions and insects, then trumpet will be blown, field of Last Day will be spread out, one should reflect on the horrors and intensity of accountability of that day when one will be held accountable for every particle (minute thing that one considered insignificant during one's worldly sojourn). One should recall what Qur'an has narrated about Hell. If state of hope is desired then one should reflect on the blessings and comforts of Paradise, its gardens, trees, streams, and its denizens and reflect that all these blessings and comforts are everlasting.

This is the method of reflection in exoteric or revealed knowledge (*Uloon al-Mu'amla*) and in good and bad inner qualities. A beginner spiritual traveler should keep one's time preoccupied in these reflections until one's heart becomes adorned with noble and sublime inner qualities, characteristics, temperaments and dispositions, gets illumined with noble spiritual stations, and one's inner and outer being becomes purified of all undesirable traits. It should be remembered here at this point that although it is an excellent worship to reflect in these matters, these are not the real objectives. The real objective of Gnostics and intimates of God is to reflect on Divine Majesty and Beauty, and to immerse in this reflection in such a way that they become annihilated (*Fana*) even from their own selves [so that no trace of self remains and one attains the Divine Presence], in other words, they disregard their own selves, their own states, their own spiritual stations, their own inner qualities, and everything. Their state in the reflection of the Beloved is like the state of a true lover on witnessing the beloved. At that time,

one does not even have the consciousness to cast a glance on one's own state and to pay attention to one's own qualities, rather one is stunned and forgets everything about one's self. This is the highest degree of pleasure for the lovers [of the true Beloved].

The reflection that is being discussed here, pertains to matters that adorn the hearts with sublime inner qualities, characteristics, temperaments, and dispositions so that it attains the pleasure of [Divine] intimacy and meeting with the Beloved. If one spends the entire life in the reformation of the heart, then when will one attain the pleasure of intimacy and meeting [with the Beloved]? Annihilation (*Fana*) in God is the real purpose of seekers of God, and the apex of pleasure for the Gnostics and intimates of God. A spiritual traveler should make reflection, as explained in the aforementioned, a routine and act upon it day and night, and at all times, one should not become negligent of the self, the [reprehensible inner] qualities that distance one from God, and those [inner spiritual] states that draw one closer to God. Rather, every spiritual traveler should keep a notebook to note down all of one's good and bad qualities, sins, and acts of [Divine] obedience, and should look at them every day to test the self [to see if one is getting better or not in taming and eradicating all bad qualities and adorning one's heart and soul with all good qualities].

Destructive & Salvific Inner Qualities: Although there are innumerable destructive qualities but so are the salvific qualities. However, if close watch is kept on ten destructive and ten salvific qualities then it would be sufficient. These ten destructive qualities are: miserliness, arrogance, self-conceitedness, ostentation, jealousy, anger, gluttony, excessive lust, love of wealth, and love of fame and power. It is hoped that one who protects oneself from these, will be able to safeguard oneself from [all] reprehensible qualities [as these ten are the fountainheads of all evils, vices, and negativities]. Then salvific qualities [that imbue one with positivity, nobility, sublimity, tranquility, goodness and success] are shame and regret over sins [and wrongdoings], patience in adversities, acceptance of Divine Will whether good or bad, gratitude over all blessings, balance between fear and hope in God, abstinence [from all manifestations of worldliness] in the world, sincerity in actions, good treatment of all of God's creations, Divine love, and humility for the sake of God. If these twenty qualities are listed in the notebook of the spiritual traveler, then cure does not remain difficult. The method of cure is that one starts with reflection on one of these twenty matters. When one bad quality is eradicated, one can cross that off in the notebook, stop worrying about it, have gratitude to God that He granted deliverance from that evil and purified one's heart of that, and know that one has cleansed the heart of that evil solely with God-given ability and help. If God had left the matter to one's self, one would not have been able to erase an iota of evil from one's heart. Afterwards, one should pay attention to remaining matters and have reflection on each one of them and remove them. When that happens, one should cross it off in the notebook until one becomes free of all destructive qualities. Then one should do the same for the salvific inner qualities and adopt these sublime qualities one by one and cross them off in the

notebook when that happens, until all sublime inner qualities have been attained. This should be the routine of an active spiritual traveler (*Mureed*).

This was the way of reflection in exoteric knowledge (*Uloom al-Mu'amla*) that was adopted by the pious and the scholars. When they got done with this method, they did not have any inclination left towards their selves, instead, they used to make progress from these reflections to reflect on Divine Splendor and Majesty, and with the eye of the heart, they reflected on the pleasure of witnessing the Divine Beauty. However, this reflection is only attained when the human being is separated from all destructive qualities and is adorned with all salvific sublime qualities. Even if it (witnessing) appears before that, it would be faulty and ephemeral like a flash of lightening that shines then disappears [immediately afterwards]. One who engages in Divine reflection without getting rid of destructive traits and adoring the inner being with the salvific [qualities], is like that lover who finds solitude with one's beloved [after tremendous effort] but snakes and scorpions are crawling in one's clothes and biting one at that time. Obviously, the pain from the bites of these harmful creatures will cause all the pleasures of this solitude [with the beloved after tremendous effort and suffering] to get lost and all the delights to get ruined. The destructive qualities are also harmful like snakes and scorpions and they are destroyers of the pleasure of witnessing the Divine Beauty. The pain [in the depths of soul] one will experience in the grave [after the inevitable demise from this world,] due to these destructive qualities, will be far greater than the [bodily] pain [one suffers] from snake and scorpion bites. This detail shows, how a servant [of God] should reflect on the desirable and undesirable qualities of one's own self.

Second Type of Reflection - In God's Majesty, Greatness and Grandeur: The second type of reflection is that the servant reflects on God's Majesty, Greatness and Grandeur. There are two stations of this reflection: First station that is superior is to reflect on the Divine Being and Attributes and to reflect on the meanings of Divine Names [where each Divine Name represents one specific Divine quality or attribute permeating every realm of existence in its every facet and manifestation]. [However,] This is the station that has been prohibited [for the laymen] as it has been said [in a prophetic narration], "Reflect in God's creations, [and] do not reflect in His Being". It has been prohibited because the intellects are astonished [in the reflection of God's Being]. Only the Gnostics and intimates of God dare to lift their sights towards it. However, even they do not have the courage for the permanence of this sight. The state of Divine Majesty in comparison with the eyes of the creation, is like the state of the eyes of a bat in comparison with the light of the sun. Bat cannot endure the light of the sun; hence it remains in hiding during the day, and at night, in the remaining light of the sun, it flies around. And the state of the Gnostics and intimates of God (*Siddiqeen* who possess the highest [spiritual] ranks after the prophets according to Qur'anic injunction) is like an ordinary human being in the sun who can look at the sun, however, one does not have the tolerance for permanence of this sight, rather, the danger remains that one may lose the eyesight by continuously looking at the sun. Looking with an intent gaze [at the

sun], even though it may be for a short duration, is a cause of damage to the eyes. Similarly, looking at the Being of God [with the eye of heart or soul] creates astonishment and wonderment, and intellect gets perturbed. That's why, it is better to not make the Divine Being and Attributes, the center of one's reflection because many intellects cannot endure this reflection. However, the small amount of reflection [about God's Being] that scholars have permitted with clarity are that God is free of place, surroundings and directions, He is neither in the universe, nor outside it, He is neither attached to it, nor is He separated from it. Some people's intellects became so astonished and perturbed in this connection that they refused to accept because they did not have the strength to listen to or understand these things. Some people could not even tolerate a lower level of explanation than this. Hence, when it was said to them that God is exalted above this to have a head, feet, hands, eyes, or some other [human like] organs, or a body that can fit into some amount or size, these people refused to accept even that and started to say that this is a shortcoming in Divine Greatness and Majesty. These foolish people believed that greatness and grandeur is in [having human-like] organs. The reason for this [erroneous belief] is that human being knows one's own body and considers it great, and things that do not equate to one's self in their qualities, one does not consider them as great. Most people's intellects are like that. In reality, human being is oppressive, ignorant and ungrateful, that's why, God told one of His prophets, "Do not tell My servants about My attributes because they will refuse [to accept] it, rather tell them the things that they can comprehend and understand". Respect [for God], Divine law, and reformation of [God's] creations (humanity) demands that we do not go after God's Being [as we are not capable of comprehending it with our limited intellects].

The second station [of reflection on God's Majesty, Greatness and Grandeur] is that we reflect on God's actions, wonders of His ability, power, and creativity, and on matters related to His wonderous dealings with His creations. These matters attest to His Majesty, Greatness, Grandeur, and Superiority. They also argue about His perfection of knowledge, perfection of wisdom, perfection of His abilities, and implementation of His Will. We should look at the effects and manifestations of His Attributes, instead of His Attributes because we do not have the strength to look at His attributes just like we cannot [continuously] see the sun. The illumination of earth is due to the effect of the light of the sun and an effect points to the one who is affecting even though one who is effecting is not seen. Everything that is present on earth is an effect or indication of God's abilities and is an illumination from the illuminations of His Being. There is no darkness greater than non-existence or nothingness and no illumination is clearer than existence. The existence of all things is a light of God's Being because all things [being contingent beings] exist through His Being while His Being exists on its own. Just like the light of things that exist is due to the sun [as they become visible with the light of the sun, otherwise, they would be steeped in utter darkness], and sun is illumined on its own. When sun becomes more illumined [as it rises], its image can be seen in the water put in a container because eyes can stay on its image as if, the brilliance of the sun is somewhat reduced by means of water. Similarly, Divine actions are also the

means of witnessing the Doer of those actions (God). We witness His qualities and do not get astonished by the illumination of His Being. Hence, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) has said:

"Reflect on God's creations do not reflect on His Being".

Being entrapped in the deception of lusts and self-importance, you have become negligent of looking at the dominions of the heavens and the earth and now in your eyes, there is no importance left even for the beauty of the Owner and Master (God) of the dominion. Your parable is like of an ant that has made a home (ant hole) in a magnificent palace. That palace is lofty, beautiful, and strong. Its beautiful parts have servants standing in them and are replete with precious goods. If that ant comes out of its hole and meets with its sister and even gets the ability to talk then it could not even talk about any topic other than its dark and narrow abode, provision of little food, and state of its economic situation, although, its abode is in a beautiful palace. What it should have done is to tell its sister that it lives in a magnificent palace, whose walls are made of gold and floor made of silver, it is crowded with beautiful people who are decked with fine and precious things. However, this poor ant knows nothing about the palace, nor its sight exceeds beyond its abode and food because it cannot exceed beyond those matters due to its short-sightedness. But what is your compulsion? Why are you, while living in your narrow and lowly home, negligent of God's wide expansive palace, its lofty roofs, and its beautiful goods and accouterments? You are not familiar with His angels who live in His heavens. You know as much about the heaven as the ant knows about the ceiling of its abode. Your familiarity with angels is only to the extent of ant's familiarity with you or to other residents of the home. However, ant does not have the ability to have more understanding than that nor in its small intellect, can the wonders of the palaces get comprehended. Contrary to that, you have the ability to run the horses of reflection in the heavenly dominion and to attain the understanding of its wonders. Why don't you take advantage of this ability?

Now we stop our pen from further mentioning of reflection. It is a topic that has no limit. Even if we spend our long lifetimes in its mentioning (explanation), we will not be able to elucidate the Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*) that God has granted us, even though what we know is very small in comparison to the knowledge of scholars and intimates of God, and what scholars and intimates of God know, is very insignificant compared to the knowledge of the honored prophets of God, and what honored prophets have, is nothing in front of the Gnosis of angels in God's proximity. Then if all the knowledge of all the angels, *Jinns*, and human beings is put in front of God's knowledge, it will not even be right to call it knowledge, instead, it could not be termed anything other than bewilderment, astonishment, fault, shortcoming, and lacking substance. Exalted above all imperfections is the Being who bestowed Gnosis (*Ma'rifa* - Knowledge, intimacy, and proximity of God) on His [select] servants and informed them that:

وَمَآ أُوتِيتُم مِّنَ ٱلْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

"You [human beings] have been given knowledge but very little!" (Qur'an, Chapter 17, Verse 85)

This was a cursory discussion on the methods that people should reflect on. Here the method of reflecting on God's Being is not mentioned, rather, only the reflection of [God's] creations have been mentioned so that one can attain the Gnosis of the Creator (God) so that [in turn] the understanding of His greatness, awe and abilities is born [in the heart]. To the extent the Gnosis of the wonders of God's creation and craft increases, to that extent the Gnosis of His Majesty, Grandeur, and Greatness will increase. It is like you love a scholar based on one's knowledge and you have understanding of that knowledge. If you happen to come across some other knowledge of that scholar or some unique verses of poetry or some other beautiful book or a new research from one then your love for that scholar increases even more and one's respect and honor will multiply further. Every sentence, verse of poetry, and research of such a one, increases one's honor and admiration in your heart and elevate one's rank even more. Similarly, one should reflect on God's creations. This heaven (universe and beyond) and earth and everything that is present in between, is His book and writing and it is a voluminous work of authorship. You can study it all your life, but it will never end, and every day, doors and avenues of new revelations and new understandings will open up for you. However, truth [of the matter] is that every person has only that much share in reflection and witnessing [the splendors of Divine Beauty] that God has apportioned for one [from His Supreme wisdom according to one's efforts, spiritual strivings, sincerity, perseverance and above all the Divine Will].

We will end this discussion right here. In the "Book of Gratitude" (Chapter 12), our subject was God's creations. However, it was there with regards to the fact that whatever God has bestowed upon us, is His favor, reward, and grace, and here it is present with regards to the fact that it is His act and we should reflect upon it. Here the things we have reflected upon are also reflected upon by a philosopher, however, the reflection of a person who has been granted with the Divinely bestowed ability and success (*Tawfeeq*), becomes a conduit of guidance (*Hidaya*) and of eternal happiness and everlasting success (*Sa'adah*). There is not a single particle in the heavens and the earth that God would not use to guide some and misguide some others. Nevertheless, one who deliberates in these matters from the perspective of them being God's actions and attributes, such a one receives the Gnosis of God's Majesty and Grandeur and gets guided from them. And one whose sight is on one thing being a cause and another being an effect [in a chain of cause and effect] with no relationship to the Originator of all the causes, effects and means (*Musabbib al-Asbab*), gets misguided. We seek God's refuge from misguidance and pray to Him that God saves us, purely out of His Kindness and Grace, from all occasions where the feet of ignorant get swerved [causing them to falter into an abyss].

Chapter 20 – Contemplating and Never Losing Sight of One's Own Mortality and End of Worldly Life and Preparing for the Eternal Life

Realizing that this worldly life is merely a passage into the eternal life and realizing one's own mortality, fallibility and one's eventual and inevitable end, is a powerful antidote against heedlessness, negligence and obliviousness to the real purpose of one's life and against amassing wealth, materialistic obsessions, injustices, evil done to others, and conflicts with fellow human beings during one's transient and ephemeral worldly existence. Sometimes acts of selfishness and oppression unleashed on fellow human beings, are guised in altruism that this is being done for our succeeding generations. That too is a fallacy as the same end will await the succeeding generations as it awaits us. Noble ends can only be achieved through noble means and noble ends cannot be achieved through ignoble means as ends do not justify means. Realizing that the final homecoming is to God alone in the abode of eternity, and the state there will commensurate with one's deeds or misdeeds in this temporal existence of worldly life, is a powerful restraint against evil in all its forms and manifestations. Keeping sight of one's own end, puts things in right perspective by shortening one's hope for a long life to the detriment of the eternal life that starts immediately after this life ends. It helps us make the most out of our present moments and opportunities we have and keeps us on the path of rectitude and self-reformation. Ghazali's exposition on the subject is provided here in condensed form from the tenth and final book in the fourth volume of his *magnum opus* "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God" as follows [26]:

One who will be defeated by death [in the final chapter of one's life], whose final resting abode will be grave, whose companions there will be snakes, scorpions and insects, whose place of promise is the Day of Judgment, whose [final] destination would either be Heaven or Hell, (i.e., for each and every human being on the face of the earth without exceptions), it is suitable for such a one to think about death [which is the end of one's journey through the world to embark upon the eternity], mention it to oneself [as a reminder to put things in the right perspectives], prepare for it, deliberate on it, long for it [as it is the inevitability that everyone who is here will face, and everyone who is not here has already faced and now dealing with its aftermath], wait for it [as it is one's passage into eternity, and meeting with the Beloved if one longed, worked and struggled for it. For such a person, it is suitable to consider one's self (*Nafs*) as dead during one's life], because the thing that is about to come is near, and far is the thing

that will not come. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

اَلْكَيِّسُ مَنْ دَانَ نَفْسَهُ وَعَمِلَ لِمَا بَعْدَ الْمَوْتِ

"Intelligent is the one who suppresses one's self [from running amok after its desires and lusts], and work for the life that will come after death".

It is a fact that if a thing is not remembered or mentioned repeatedly then one cannot rightly prepare for it. Repeated mentioning cannot happen until attention is paid to matters that remind us about death. Hence, we will mention about death, preparation for it, matters connected to it, Hereafter, and conditions in the Hell and Paradise, so that a servant of [God] can prepare for it because the time for this journey has arrived, life is getting shorter [day by day as the time in the world allotted to each one of us by the Divine command is diminishing by each passing day], now a small lifetime remains but people are heedless of it. God says:

اَقْتَرَبَ لِلنَّاسِ حِسَابُهُمْ وَهُمْ فِي غَفْلَةٍ مُّعْرِضُونَ

"The time for accountability of people has come near but they are immersed in heedlessness and negligence." (Qur'an, Chapter 21, Verse 1)

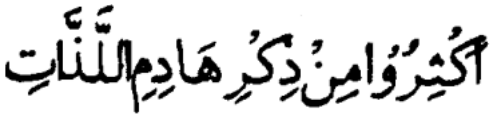
First, we will explain matters related to death beginning with the lifetime before it until the blowing of the trumpet. This is made up of eight topics.

Preparing for the Conclusion of the Journey through the World

Mentioning One's Own Mortality and Remembering it Abundantly: It should be known that one who is indulged in the world, immersed in its deception, and submerged in the love of its lusts, the heart of such a one is surely negligent of death, the mentioning of death never comes on one's tongue, nor the thought of it occurs in the heart. If someone even mentions it in front of one, one turns the face away with hate and revulsion, and intensely dislikes that mentioning. Then individuals are of three types: some are completely immersed in the world, some are repentant, and some have intense Gnosis and understanding. People in the first type do not mention death and if they happen to mention it, they connect it with regret about separation from the world and start serving it [by taking advantage of their lifetime to get more immersed in it to get maximum enjoyments out of it]. Mentioning of death in this manner, makes them more remote and distanced from God. People [in the second type] who repent, abundantly remember their own mortality so that the fear and dread [of it] gets removed from their hearts so they complete their repentance [by making amends for their

wrongs, atone for their sins, excel in the Divine worship, and tread the Divine path before the end of their lives]. Sometimes they dislike death but merely so that death may snatch them [from the world] before the completion of their repentance and before they are able to gather the provision [of good righteous deeds in the path of God for their journey back to their Creator]. Such a person is excused in disliking it because one does not categorically dislike it, instead, one fears of being deprived of meeting with God due to one's own sins [and wrongdoings]. This is just like the person who fears being deprived of meeting with the beloved, hence, is preparing for that meeting and adorning oneself in accordance with the desire of the beloved. It will not be said about such a person that one does not like to meet with one's beloved, and its indication is that one is busy preparing for the meeting with the beloved, and except that, one has no other engagement, otherwise one will be counted in the first type. Gnostic or intimate of God is the one who always remembers death and does so knowing [full well] that one will be meeting with the Beloved after death. A lover never forgets the time of meeting with the beloved. Such a person, often wants the arrival of death sooner and is pleased upon its arrival so that one can get rid of the abode of sins and get transferred to the proximity of the Lord of all the universes and existences (*Rabb al-Aalameen*). The repentant person is excused for disking death and this person is also excused for liking death. Among these two persons, the most superior in [spiritual] ranks, is the one who entrusts one's matter to God. In other words, one does not prefer for oneself either death or life, but instead, only what's beloved to one's Lord is beloved to one. Due to the intensity of Divine love, such a person reaches the exalted [spiritual] station of acceptance of Divine will. This is the desired objective and apex of achievement. Nevertheless, there is great excellence and Divine recompense in remembering one's own mortality. Even the person submerged in the world can derive this benefit from remembrance of death that starts to distance one from it (the world), and this remembrance creates disillusionment with the pleasures, and spoiling of pleasures and lusts is among the means of salvation and deliverance.

Excellence of Remembering One's Own Mortality: Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:



"Remember more the eraser of pleasures (i.e., death)".

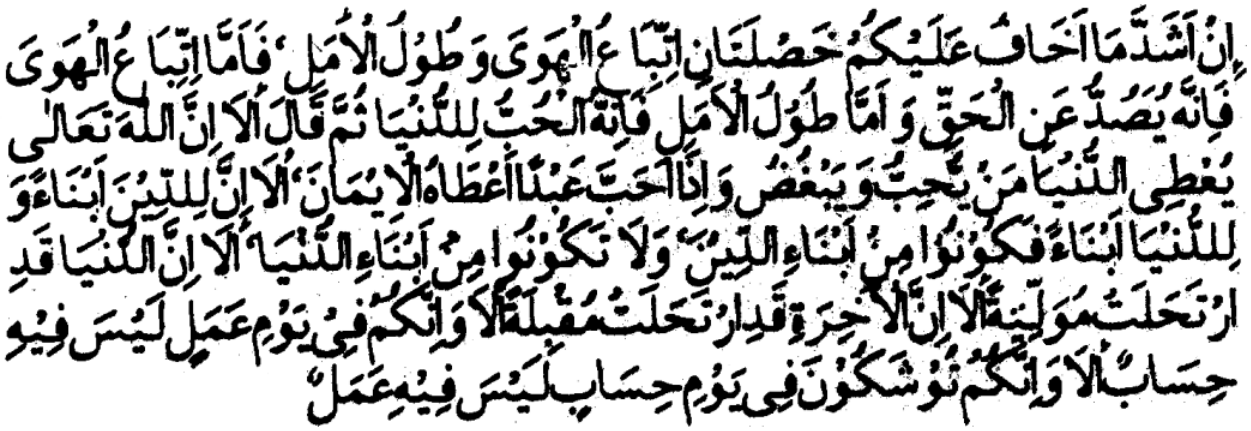
It means that the pleasures should be muddied by the remembrance of death until your heart starts to avoid them and become focused on God. World is a prison for a believer, as long as one remains imprisoned in the prison of the world, one endures variegated types of hardships in disciplining the self, in resistance to Satan, and in distancing oneself from lusts [besides dealing with life struggles and challenges]. Death liberates one from these hardships.

Method of Firmly Ingraining the Remembrance of One's Own Mortality: People are heedless and negligent of it because they do not engage in its reflection and remembrance, and even if one mentions it, one does not do so with a freed-up heart, rather one does so with a heart that is indulged in worldly lusts. Hence, mentioning it does not have any impact on the heart. The method of firmly ingraining the remembrance of one's own mortality is to empty out the heart from everything other than this remembrance and having this thought at all times as if death is in front of one, just like a traveler passing through a dangerous valley or sailing in a sea, is fully focused on the journey. Therefore, if the remembrance of one's own end remains in the heart like that, then it is hoped that it will have an impact on the heart. A beneficial method of remembering death is to think about people who were one's contemporaries of same age and were like one and seemed busy with the activities of life, but they are now in the bed of dirt (grave). How great ranks did they have, how prosperous they were but dirt has erased all of their ranks and titles, their spouses became widows and widowers, their children have lost a parent, their wealth [and properties left behind by them] are all gone, and [social] gatherings are devoid of them to the extent that no one even mentions them now as if they were not even born or existed before. If every person [that one knows about who has passed away] is examined like that and their states, circumstances of their death, their looks and appearances, their activities, their other engagements [in life] are brought to the heart and considered how they were immersed in life, had forgotten about the death, and they [mistakenly] thought that they had all the means [needed to be successful and prosperous in life] and their strength and youth would never end. Hence, they were busy in sports, play and entertainment and remained negligent of death that fast approached them [despite all of that and the fallacies they believed in, they still ultimately faced their end and are here no more]. Looking at one such person, one who was seen indulged in pleasures and enjoyments but now the feet have broken [in the grave], and body has disintegrated and scattered. One used to talk a lot in life and spread laughter but now the insects have eaten the tongue, and dirt has consumed the teeth. One used to do good [future] planning for oneself, make increasingly better arrangements that were not even needed for the next ten years, even though there was a distance of just one month between oneself and death and one did not even have any realization for it, until the death grabbed one at a time that one never expected. Suddenly, the angel of death appeared in front of one and made the announcement of Heaven or Hell in one's ears [before taking the soul away].

At this point, one should look at oneself and see that one is just like them [who have passed away and who happened to be one's contemporaries], one's state of heedlessness and negligence is just like theirs, and one is in danger of having the same ending as theirs. Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (May God be pleased with him) said, "The person of felicity and success is the one who derives lessons from others [and their lives]". Along with these thoughts and reflections, if one makes it a routine to go to the graveyards and visit the sick, then the thought of [one's inevitable] death will remain fresh in the heart, rather, it would dominate it [to the point of steering one's actions and

the entire state of being in the right direction, and putting things in the right perspective]. It is hoped in this situation that one will prepare for death and one will set aside the world characterized by deception. Merely mentioning death and remembering it superficially is not very beneficial. Whenever, the idea of something good is born in the heart, you should think that one day you will face separation from it.

Having Hopes for Long Life, Shortening Hopes, Reasons for Long Hopes, and Method of Cure: Ali (May God be pleased with him) narrated that Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:


إِنَّ أَشَدَّ مَا أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ خَصْلَتَانِ اتِّبَاعُ الْهَوَى وَطُولُ الْأَمَلِ فَأَمَّا اتِّبَاعُ الْهَوَى
فَإِنَّهُ يَصُدُّ عَنِ الْحَقِّ وَأَمَّا طُولُ الْأَمَلِ فَإِنَّهُ حُبُّ الدُّنْيَا ثُمَّ قَالَ أَلَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى
يُعْطِي الدُّنْيَا مَنْ يُحِبُّ وَيُبْغِضُ وَإِذَا أَحَبَّ عَبْدًا أَعْطَاهُ الْإِيمَانَ أَلَا إِنَّ لِلدِّينِ أَبْنَاءً وَ
لِلدُّنْيَا أَبْنَاءً فَكُونُوا مِنْ أَبْنَاءِ الدِّينِ وَلَا تَكُونُوا مِنْ أَبْنَاءِ الدُّنْيَا أَلَا إِنَّ الدُّنْيَا قَدِ
ارْتَحَلَتْ مُوَلِّيَةً أَلَا إِنَّ الْآخِرَةَ قَدِ ارْتَحَلَتْ مُقْبِلَةً أَلَا وَإِنَّكُمْ فِي يَوْمِ عَمَلٍ لَيْسَ فِيهِ
حِسَابٌ أَلَا وَإِنَّكُمْ سَتُوشِكُونَ فِي يَوْمِ حِسَابٍ لَيْسَ فِيهِ عَمَلٌ

“I fear two things the most from you: one is following your own caprice (desires from the lower self) and second is having long hopes [or expectation for long lives]. Following one’s caprice, stops one from the path of truth and [having] long hopes, means love of the world. [He then said] Be aware, God grants the world to every person, whether He loves ones or dislikes one [due to one’s own evil actions], however, He grants faith [in Him and in eternal verities that are necessarily connected to Him] to [only] the one He loves. Be aware, some people are the sons (have complete dedication) of the Divine path (*Deen*) and some are the sons of the world. Be the sons of the Divine path and not the sons of the world. Be aware, the Hereafter is coming to you head on. Today, you are in the day when you can act [to prepare well for the coming eternal life] and there is no accountability in it. Soon you will be in the day of accountability (Day of Judgment) and there will be no action in it [as the time to act had expired at the end of one’s worldly journey]”. (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Ibn Abi al-Dunya*)

There are two reasons for long hopes (or hopes and expectations for a long life): one is ignorance, and the second one is the love of the world (worldliness). The meaning of the love of the world is that when a person becomes accustomed to its lusts, pleasures, and engagements, it becomes very heavy on one to separate from the world and that prevents one from reflecting on [impending] death because death is the cause of this separation [between oneself and the world]. Human being inherently distances something from one that one dislikes. It is the human nature that one is always afflicted with false hopes and desires, something that is in accordance with one’s desire. Hence,

remaining in the world is exactly in accordance with one's desire. That's why, one always thinks about that and supposes everything for oneself that are the needs for subsistence such as spouse, children, home, friends, relatives, rides, and all the means of the world. One's heart is so engrossed in this worry that one becomes negligent of death, does not like its nearness, if ever the thought of death occurs to the heart that one will die and there is a need to prepare for it, then one prevaricates, promises the self that there is still plenty of time, I will repent when I grow up. When one grows up, one postpones it to old age. When one grows old, one says, "When I get done with building a house or return from a travel or do something for the future of a child or deal with an adversary then I will repent". One prevaricates with the self like that and keeps delaying (postponing) the repentance into a never-ending chain, because the thing one is involved in, gives rise to ten other new things until delay gets longer and longer, new engagements crop up and incentives to complete them rise forcefully, until the promised time [of one's final end] comes and death snatches one away [from the worldly life] at a time that one had not even imagined. At that time, one's regret and sorrow are worth seeing. One thinks that the person who is busy in the world will surely get some free time sometime. This is merely a misunderstanding as one can only get free time when one completely detaches oneself [in the heart] from the world.

Ignorance is that one has great confidence in one's youth and thinks that death will not come in one's youth, although, this is pure foolishness and ignorance. If one looks into one's surroundings, one will find the numbers of old people to be not very many. The reason for that is there are many deaths that happen before the old age. By the time, an old person knocks at the door of death, thousands of youths and children have already embraced death. Sometimes, one considers death distant from the perspective of one's health (good health deceives one into believing that one will not die before old age) and does not give importance to [the prospect of] sudden death. One does not know that sudden death is not impossible; if sudden death is considered impossible then sudden illness cannot be considered impossible, rather, illness, appears all of a sudden and when one is sick then who can say that the death is not distant? If this negligent and heedless person thinks and understands that there is no specific time reserved for death but it can come anytime in childhood, youth, old age, winter, summer, spring, fall, day or night, then it is hoped that death will assume importance in one's eyes and one will be able to complete the preparation for it. However, unfamiliarity with these matters and love of the world is in front of one and one does not think that it can happen to one. One goes to funerals but does not understand that [one day] people will walk in one's own funeral like that. In reality, going to funerals has become habitual and seeing people dead has happened so many times that one has become accustomed to it. Now seeing a funeral, does not evoke the realization of one's own death, nor does one think about it. But death will come just once, that will be the first and the last time. Nevertheless, employing prevarication is merely ignorance and foolishness.

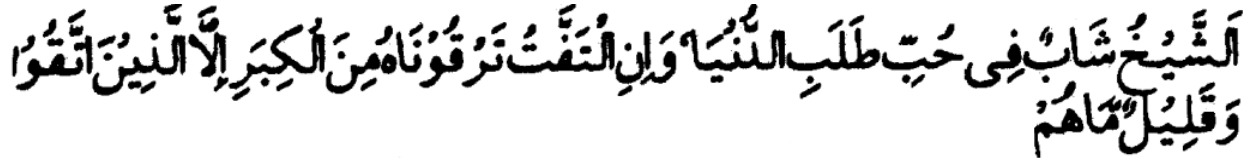
When it has become clear that the reason for considering one's own mortality as remote, is [tantamount to] ignorance and love of the world (worldliness), then it is also imperative to know its cure. An illness can be cured by removing the cause of it. The cure of ignorance can be done by clarity of thought and listening to words of wisdom from purified hearts. However, the cure for the love of the world is difficult. It is such a disease whose cure has made the firsts and the lasts (sages from earlier and later generations) tired. Its cure is nothing other than the servant [of God] having faith on the Last Day (Day of Judgment) and on whatever is in there in terms of recompense and punishment. When certitude is perfected on the Last Day then the love of world will leave the heart because the love of something superior, dissipates the love of something inferior from the heart. Here on the one hand is the world with all of its problems and on the other hand is the Hereafter with all of its finesse, beauty, and glory. When human being reflects on both with the clarity, limpidity, and lucidity of the heart, one will not have the slightest inclination left towards the world (worldliness), even though one is granted the government from the east to the west. It is because, when a person receives a small part of this wide world, that too is not devoid of muddiness. One whose heart has faith in the Hereafter firmly ingrained in it, how can such a person solidify the love of the world in one's heart? One should glance at one's limbs all the times and reflect how beautiful, lively, and strong they are but soon the insects in the grave will make them their food. There will not be a single part of the body that insects will not eat. If anything will be left with one, it will be the correct knowledge and the righteous deeds [I did in my worldly life]. Along with the reflection in these matters, one should reflect on other relevant matters such as the punishment of the grave, questioning of the angels (*Munkir Nakeer*), Day of Judgment, resurrection, events of the Last Day, and court appearance and accountability [before God] on that mighty day. These matters are such that if one reflects on them, the remembrance of death remains fresh [in the heart] and there is desire to prepare for it.

Degrees of People in terms of Long and Short Hopes: People are different in this respect (in terms of their hopes and expectations for having long or short lives). Some people desire subsistence and want to live in the world forever. God says the following about such people:

يَوَدُّ أَحَدُهُمْ لَوْ يُعَمَّرُ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ

"Some among them want to have a life of a thousand years." (Qur'an, Chapter 2, Verse 96)

Some people want to live till old age. This is that extreme age that is observed. These people are entrapped in intense love of the world. Hence, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) has said:



"An old person is young in one's love for seeking (or running after) the world, even though, one's limbs have become crooked due to old age, but such people are not God-fearing, and they (i.e., people with pious awe, reverence and fear of God) are very small in numbers". (Narrated by *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him])

Some people do not have expectation for more than a year; hence they make arrangements for their necessities for a year, in winter they accumulate for summer and in summer they accumulate for winter. Therefore, when they manage to gather things for one year [of survival], they get engaged in Divine worship. Some people expect to live for less than a year. They do not prepare for next season in the current season. There are some people who do not have expectation [to live] for more than a day. They prepare only for today and do not engage in preparing for tomorrow. Jesus (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said, "Do not worry about the sustenance for tomorrow, if tomorrow comes in your life, then the sustenance of tomorrow will also come with it, and if there is no existence of tomorrow in your life, then you should not worry about other people's lives [in terms of leaving behind things you are accumulating today for other people to take and benefit from tomorrow when you will be gone]". There are some people, whose expectation [of life and living] does not even exceed beyond a moment! As Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said, "O Abdullah [bin Umar]! When you reach the morning then do not worry about the evening and when you reach the evening then do not worry about the morning". Some people did not even relied on a moment, hence Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) after fulfilling the call of nature, immediately performed ablution with dust (*Tayammum* - an ablution done for the sake of outer purity with dust in the absence or remoteness of water, as Prophet always maintained the state of outer and inner purity) right at that moment even though the water was not too far and used to say, "Perhaps I will not be able to reach the water [and my soul would be taken away even before that]", as if death was in front of him and about to come to him. Such a person prays [to God] as if it is one's last prayer [which is done with utmost sincerity and presence of the heart in front of the Divine]. Mu'adh ibn Jabal (May God be pleased with him) was in the same state, hence when Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) asked him about the reality of faith, he replied, "I have not set any [foot] step when I conjectured that I would be able to take another step". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Abu Na'eem fi al-Hilya*) It is narrated about [a great African saint] Aswad Habshi (May God have mercy upon him) that when he prayed at night, he used to look around here and there. Someone asked him about why he did that, to which he responded, "I [look around to] see where the angel of death is coming from".

This is the explanation of various ranks and degrees of people [in terms of their hopes and expectations for a long life]. They have recompense from God in accordance with their degrees. One whose hope and expectation [for life or living] is for a month, is different from the one whose expectation is more than a month even if it is more by a day, both do not have the same degrees. There is justice and fairness with God, and He does not commit injustice by equating them [because they are not equal in this matter]. He says:

فَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُۥ

"One who does an atom's weight worth of good shall see it [before God]." (Qur'an, Chapter 99, Verse 7)

The effect of shortening of hopes and expectations [for a long life] is evident from the advancement [one makes] towards [performing good righteous] deeds [in all its earnest]. The sign of ability and success [from God] (*Tawfeeq*) is that the death should be in front of one's eyes, one is not negligent of it even for a moment, and is ever prepared for one's final end. If one is alive till the evening then one thanks God for it as He granted one the opportunity for His obedience and be pleased that one's day did not get wasted, rather, one got one's share [of Divine obedience and righteous deeds in the path of God] out of it, and the share one got out of it, has been stored (safe deposited) for one for the Hereafter. Then one begins the morning with the same gratitude, listening [to the guidance and the right counsel] and Divine obedience. Only that person can do this with ease whose heart is free of [the worries, anxieties, planning and strategizing for] tomorrow and is not worried about what will happen tomorrow. Such a person will attain eternal happiness and endless triumph (*Sa'adah*) after death, and during one's lifetime, one will remain happy due to one's preparations for the afterlife and having the pleasure of entreaties to God (*Manajaat*). For such a person, death is a means of attaining eternal happiness and everlasting success (*Sa'adah*), and the life is a means of increasing the eternal happiness and everlasting success. O human being! Keep the thought of your end in your heart at all the times. Life is flying you away [from the world] and your self is indulged in negligence [of it]. Haply, it may be that your journey [of life through this world] is about to end and your [final] destination is nigh. Only by advancing towards actions [of goodness, piety, nobility, and righteousness] can you attain the comforts of the destination.

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said, "None of you waits except for an opulence (richness or prosperity) that will make one rebellious, or for a poverty that will make one neglectful of Divine obedience, or for an illness that will make one [physically] incapacitated, or for an old age that will nullify the intellect, or for such a death that is about to come soon, or for *Dajjal* (anti-Christ) and *Dajjal* is the worst one to be in disappearance who is being waited for, or for the Day of Judgment and Day of Judgment is extremely hard and bitter". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Tirmidhi* on the authority of Abu Hurairah [May God be pleased with him]).

Abdullah bin Abbas (May God be pleased with him) narrates that Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

اِغْتَنِمْ خَمْسًا قَبْلَ خَمْسٍ شَبَابَكَ قَبْلَ هَرَمِكَ وَصِحَّتَكَ قَبْلَ سُقْمِكَ وَ غِنَاكَ قَبْلَ فَقْرِكَ وَفَرَاغَكَ قَبْلَ شُغْلِكَ وَحَيَاتَكَ قَبْلَ مَوْتِكَ

“Value five things before five things [and use them wisely in right endeavors]: your youth before your old age, your health before your illness, your prosperity before your poverty, your free time before your engagements (busy time), and your life before your death”. (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Ibn Abi al-Dunya*)

In another narration, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

نِعْمَتَانِ مَغْبُوْنٌ فِيْهِمَا كَثِيْرٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ اَلصِّحَّةُ وَالْفَرَاغُ

“Two blessings are such that most people suffer loss in them [by not rightly taking full advantage of them]: health and free time (repose or respite)”. (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Sahih Bukhari* on the authority of Abdullah ibn Abbas [May God be pleased with him])

The meaning of this prophetic narration is that a human being is [Divinely] bestowed with both of these blessings but one is not able to take advantage of both of them, but when they are gone, one realizes their value and importance. God says:

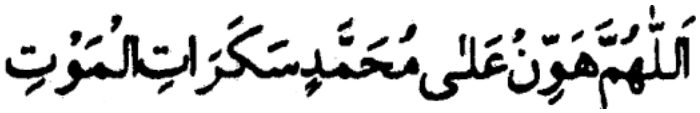
ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَ ٱلْمَوْتَ وَٱلْحَيَوٰةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا

“[God is the] One who created death and life in order to test you [with their trails and challenges] so that [to determine and give you an opportunity to see for yourself] who among you does more good [noble and righteous] deeds (strivings, endeavors and accomplishments).” (Qur’an, Chapter 67, Verse 2)

Pain in the Death Throes: Let it be known that the pain of the death throes can only be accurately estimated by one who has passed through this stage. One who has not experienced this pain can deduce the pain and adversities that have reached one from time to time or some estimation can be made by observing people at the intensity of their last moments. It can be argued from logical deduction that the [bodily] organ or limb that does not have soul in it, does not experience any pain, and if soul is present then the feeling of pain is also there. It is learned from this that the pain is perceived by the soul. Hence, when one is injured then its impact reaches the soul and to the extent it reaches the soul, to that extent it feels the pain, because the pain spreads to the flesh, blood, and other parts of the body. That’s why, the soul experiences less pain,

however, if it's the case that the center of pain and discomfort is specifically the soul and nothing but the soul, then the severity of the pain can be imagined. Death throes [in the last moments of life] refers to this very pain that descends on the entity of soul and spreads through all of its components until no part of the soul, spread out throughout the body, remains where this pain has not penetrated and reached. The pain of death throes attacks the entity of the soul and spreads throughout all of its parts because it (soul) is being removed from each and every vein, each and every joint, each and every part [of the body], in short, from every part from the head to the toe, soul is removed by pulling it out [by the Divine command at the appointed time for every person's inevitable ending]. It can be assessed from this the amount of pain and suffering that has to be endured by the soul.

As far as the question is concerned, "Human being screams a lot when one is injured or gets hit but does not scream at the time of death, although you say that the pain experienced in death throes is more. [What is the reason for that?]" The answer is that because of the excessive shock, the dying person's tongue is sealed (not able to speak) and is not able to scream. Pain is so intense that the heart, brain, and body all become incapacitated by this attack. All strength is gone, all organs get weakened, no strength is left to plead, intellect separates away, speech is snatched away from the tongue, organs become motionless, one wants to scream aloud to vent out the pent-up feelings of the heart and find some soothing relief from the pain and sorrow, but one cannot scream. If some strength in left [in the dying person], then at the time of soul departing, the throat and the chest emanate a pent up [gurgling or rattling] sound, color changes to the color of the dust as if that dust appears that is the origin of the human being, all veins start to pull because there is pain everywhere inside out, eyes move up, lips shrink, tongue is pulled inside, fingers turn green. What do you ask about the state of the body whose every vein is being pulled? If one vein in the body is pulled, one is compelled to scream due to the intensity of the pain. Here all the veins are getting pulled, then gradually all organs start to die. Both feet die, firstly both feet become cold, then the shins, then the thighs, then pangs after pangs for every organ, then intensity after intensity is faced until the soul reaches the throat during its pull [on the way out]. At that time, one's eyes turn away from the world and the people of the world, the door of repentance is shut, and sorrow and shame overcasts. In short, the harshness, pain, and bitterness of the throes of death cannot be described. Hence, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) supplicated to God [also by way of teaching the entire humanity]:



"O God! Make the harshness of death throes easy for Muhammad!"

Ordinary people (laymen) do not give any importance to these throes, nor do they seek [God's] refuge from them because perception of things before they actually happen, happens by the light of prophethood (*Nabuwwa*) and by the light of the intimacy with the

Divine (*Wilaya*). Hence, the prophets and intimates of God (Gnostics) have more fear of death [because they know beforehand what it entails, while the rest of the humanity does not know and is oblivious to it until they experience it firsthand themselves].

What Actions are Better at the Time of Death? A good thing that can happen, at the time of death, is that the dying person is peaceful and the recitation of the statement of testimony ("There is no god but God [لَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا اللّٰهُ]") remains on one's tongue, and heart has good opinion and sentiments for God (*Husn al-Dhun*). Utterance of this statement of testimony is a good sign. Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri (May God be pleased with him) said that Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said:

لَقِّنُوا مَوْتَاكُمْ لَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا اللّٰهُ

"Exhort your dying persons to recite 'There is no god but God (لَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا اللّٰهُ)'".

Umar (May God be pleased with him) said, "Visit your dying persons and advise them because they witness such matters [at that time] that you don't [witness], and exhort them to recite 'There is no god but God'". The person exhorting should not insist on one's exhortation and use gentleness in that because sometimes, the tongue of the dying person does not move.

The upshot of this explanation is that when human being embraces death, one should not have anything in the heart except God. If in the heart, one seeks nothing but God then one's death will be [the means of] going to the Beloved [in the state of Divine love, being enveloped in it, making the passage into eternity a wonderous experience], and one cannot have a greater blessing than going to one's Beloved. If one's heart is engaged in the world and is saddened due to the separation from its pleasures, and the recitation of [the attestation of the Divine,] 'There is no god but God (لَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا اللّٰهُ)' is merely on one's tongue while the heart does not ascertain it, then one's matter is not devoid of danger, except that God bestows His blessings and accepts the mere saying from one. However, it is better to have good opinion of God at that time. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) visited a young man who was about to die. He asked him, "How do you find yourself in this state at this time?" He replied, "I have hope in God and am fearful of my sins". Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said, "These two things, when they gather [simultaneously] in a servant [of God], God grants one what one expects [from Him], and grants deliverance to one from the thing one fears". It is better to mention the good deeds of the servant (dying person) at the time of one's death so that one has a good opinion of God [in terms of having hopes in Him at the end of one's life journey].

We have explained the state of dying person in the throes of death, state of the dead before burial and after burial (some of this explanation from Ghazali has been skipped

here in the interest of brevity). We have explained before that if the deceased is among those who will have Divine wrath [due to one's own wrongdoings and their severity], one will face the darkness and insects of the grave, the questioning of the angels in the grave, then the punishment of the grave. Even more difficult stages of Divine retribution are those that will be faced after the grave such as the blowing of the trumpet [that signals the advent of the Last Day], resurrection on the Day of Judgment, being presented before God [for accountability with Divine justice and fairness], questioning [in the Divine court] about things been more or less [in terms of one's wrongdoings during worldly life for not doing things justly and fairly], weighing of actions in the Scale of Balance [to determine their worth in terms of good or bad, having substance or empty pretensions], then crossing the bridge of *Sirat* that will be razor-thin, then waiting for the [final] decision about one's attainment of either eternal happiness and everlasting success (*Sa'adah*) or eternal damnation and failure (*Shaqawah*). It is imperative for you to attain the understanding of these dangers and threats [to yourself] and to have faith in them by means of ascertainment and firm ingraining [in the heart], then having long reflection and deliberation in them, so that the incentive and thrust to complete your preparation to avoid these [impending] dangers are born in your heart.

Divine Vision and Witnessing the Countenance of God [in Paradise]: God says in Qur'an:

لِّلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا۟ ٱلْحُسْنَىٰ وَزِيَادَةٌ ۖ

"Those who have done well [in terms of righteous deeds accepted by God], there is goodness (Paradise and its undiminishing plenitude for eternity) along with extra goodness." (Qur'an, Chapter 10, Verse 26)

This extra goodness is the Vision of God and the witnessing of His Blessed Countenance. This is such an extraordinarily supreme pleasure that upon receiving it, the denizens of Paradise will forget all other pleasures and blessings. In the "Book of Divine Love" (Chapter 16), the reality of this Divine Vision has been explained and with evidences from the Divine Book and the Prophetic Way, have been presented that repudiate the beliefs of the rejectors and deniers [of the traditional methodology] (*Ahl al-Bid'a*). Jareer ibn Abdullah al-Bajali (May God be pleased with him) said, "We were sitting in the company of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him). He looked at the moon of the fourteenth night (full moon) and said, 'You will see your Lord just like the way you see this moon. You do not fall on (push) each other [in competition] for looking at the moon. If possible, do not be tired before the prayers before the sunrise and before the sunset and perform them well [with alertness and complete devotion]'. He then recited the following verse:

وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ قَبْلَ طُلُوعِ ٱلشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ غُرُوبِهَا

'And glorify your Lord with praise before the rising of the sun and before its setting.'" (Qur'an, Chapter 20, Verse 130) (Narrated by *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Rabah [May God be pleased with him])

It has been narrated by *Hadith* collection *Sahih Muslim* by Imam Muslim who narrates from Suhaib al-Rumi (May God be pleased with him) that Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) recited the [above] verse, "Those who have done well [in terms of righteous deeds accepted by God], there is goodness (Paradise and its undiminishing plenitude for eternity) along with extra goodness (God's vision)" and said, "When people of Paradise have entered the Paradise and the people of Hell have entered the Hell, a crier will announce, 'O denizens of Paradise! There is a promise of God for you that He now wants to fulfil to you!' People of Paradise will say, 'What is that promise? Has He not made our weights [of good deeds] heavy [in the Scale of Balance]? Has He not illumined our faces? Has He not entered us into the Paradise? And has He not saved us from Hell?' After that, the veil will be lifted and they will gaze upon the Blessed Countenance of God, the Exalted'. He then said, 'There will be nothing more beloved to them than it (the Divine Vision)'".

The prophetic tradition about witnessing God has been narrated by many prophetic companions. The honor of Divine Vision is the pinnacle and culmination of all goodness, all excellences, and all blessings. In the previous pages where the blessings of Paradise have been mentioned (skipped in this work), will become insignificant in comparison with this supreme blessing. The happiness of meeting with God and the eternal happiness and endless triumph (*Sa'adah*) of Divine Vision, that they will attain, will be limitless [abiding and everlasting], rather, there is no comparison of the pleasures of Paradise with [the immensity of] this pleasure. We do not want to discuss this topic more here as it has been discussed in detail in the "Book of Divine Love, Longing and Acceptance of the Divine Will" (Chapter 16). Here we will just say that the purpose of the servant [of God] with Paradise, should be nothing except for the honor of meeting with one's Real Owner and Beloved (God) there. In the rest of the blessings of Paradise, even the grazing animals in the pastures are your partakers and co-sharers.

Mentioning the Expansiveness of God's Mercy as Glad Tidings at the Conclusion of the Book

Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) liked to give glad tidings. We should hope that God will grant us a good ending in this world and the next. We would like to end this book ("Revival of Knowledge of Path to God") with glad tidings of the expansiveness of the Divine mercy. God says:

قُلْ يَٰعِبَادِيَ ٱلَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا۟ عَلَىٰٓ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا۟ مِن رَّحْمَةِ ٱللَّهِ ۚ
إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ ٱلذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا ۚ إِنَّهُۥ هُوَ ٱلْغَفُورُ ٱلرَّحِيمُ

“Say to them (O Muhammad!) [God tells you:] O my servants who have wronged their souls! Do not despair of God’s mercy. Verily, God forgives all sins! Truly, He is forgiving and possesses tremendous mercy.” (Qur’an, Chapter 39, Verse 53)

وَمَن يَعْمَلْ سُوٓءًا أَوْ يَظْلِمْ نَفْسَهُۥ ثُمَّ يَسْتَغْفِرِ ٱللَّهَ يَجِدِ ٱللَّهَ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا

“One who does something wrong or oppresses one’s own soul then asks God for forgiveness, one will find God to be very forgiving and very merciful.” (Qur’an, Chapter 4, Verse 110)

We seek God’s forgiveness for every mistake we made with our pen in this book and in any others. We also seek God’s forgiveness for our words that do not match our actions. We also seek God’s forgiveness from our claim of understanding and knowledge, from every knowledge and action that we intended God’s approval with but ended up mixing other than Him in that intention, for the promise we made to our self [to reform and purify it] but we fell short in fulfilling it, for every blessing that we were endowed with but we used it in sin, for the fault that we ourselves were involved in but we attributed it to others either explicitly or allegorically, and for the thought that became the incentive for authoring any book or speech or teaching but it was merely for showing off to people or for artificiality or for any ingenuine reason. After seeking God’s forgiveness for all these matters, we hope that God will grant His forgiveness and blessings to the people who read, write or listen to this book, and will have clemency towards all of our outward and inner sins because His kindness is common (widespread), His mercy is expansive, and all creations are included in His endowments. We are also God’s creations. We have no other means [of deliverance from trials, tribulations, and mighty challenges of life and death] except for His largesse and generosity. Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said, “God has hundred [parts of] mercy and blessings (God has divided up His mercy into hundred parts). From among them, God has descended one mercy [out of hundred] on *Jinns* and humans, animals, birds, insects, and crawlers. Because of this one [part of Divine] mercy [that exists on earth], they deal with each other with love and giving. And has kept ninety-nine [parts of] mercy reserved with Himself and will use them on His servants to show them mercy on the Day of Judgment”. (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Abu Hurairah and Salman al-Farsi [May God be pleased with them both]) It has been narrated in a prophetic tradition that He will pull out a writing from underneath the Divine Throne, it will be written therein, ‘My mercy supersedes My wrath and I am the Most Merciful of all the merciful ones’. After that, twice as many people from Hell will be taken out as there are in the Paradise”.

(Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*) God will ask the believers on the Day of Judgment, "Was meeting with Me beloved to you?" They will reply, "Yes, O our Lord!" God will ask, "Why?" They will reply, "We had hope for Your clemency and forgiveness". God will say, "I have made My forgiveness incumbent upon Myself". (Narrated by *Hadith* collections *Musnad Ahmed* and *Tabarani*)

It has been narrated in a prophetic tradition that God will command on the Day of Judgment), "Take everyone out of Hell who did My remembrance or feared Me at some place". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Tirmidhi* on the authority of Anas bin Malik [May God be pleased with him]) Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said, "God has even more affection for His servants (human beings) than a mother's affection for her child". (Narrated by *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Umar [May God be pleased with him]) Jabir bin Abdullah (May God be pleased with him) narrates, "On the Day of Judgment, one whose good deeds exceed one's sins will enter the Paradise without accountability, and one whose good deeds and sins are equal, will face some accountability then one will be admitted to the Paradise. The intercession of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) will be for that person who had destroyed oneself and whose back will be bent (overburdened) with the weight of one's sins".

At the end of a long prophetic tradition, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) mentioned the Day of Judgment and the bridge of *Sirat* then said, "God will command the angels to take anyone out of Hell who has any goodness of the size of *Dinar* (gold coin) in one's heart. Angels will take such people out and, in this way, uncountable people will come out. Angels will say, 'O God! The people You commanded us about, we did not leave anyone from them'. Then God will say, 'Go back and take out anyone from Hell who has any goodness of the size of a particle in one's heart'. Therefore, innumerable creations (people) will come out of Hell. Angels will say, 'O God! The people You commanded about, none of them has remained in Hell'". Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri (May God be pleased with him) after narrating this tradition, used to say, "If you do not ascertain me regarding this tradition then read this verse:

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ ۖ وَإِن تَكُ حَسَنَةً يُضَٰعِفْهَا وَيُؤْتِ مِن لَّدُنْهُ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

'Verily, God will not commit oppression of the size of a particle, and if one has done righteous deeds, God will multiply it manifold [purely out of Divine largesse, generosity, and magnanimity] and will grant even more mighty recompense from Himself.'" (Qur'an, Chapter 4, Verse 40)

Abdullah bin Abbas (May God be pleased with him) narrated that one day Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) came [to a group of prophetic companions] and said, "Nations were displayed in front of me and I saw one prophet passing by with a large group of his followers, and another prophet passing by with only a small group of people, and another prophet passing by with only ten (persons), and

another prophet passing by with only five (persons), and another prophet passed by alone [with not even a single follower]. And then I looked and saw a large multitude of people and expected that perhaps they are from my nation (*Ummah*), but I was told that this is the nation of Prophet Moses (Peace and blessings of God be upon him). Then I was asked to look. I saw a huge crowd that covered the horizon. I was asked to continue looking like that. Hence, I saw an immense creation. I was informed, 'Those are your followers, and those are seventy thousand (persons) in front of them who will neither have any reckoning of their accounts nor will receive any punishment'". People then went away and Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) did not say who these seventy-thousand people would be. On that the companions started to say to each other, "We were born in polytheism but we later on had faith in God and His Messenger. These people must be our children [who were not born in disbelief]". Prophet heard the news about this conversation [and decided to address these guesses about who these people are who will enter Paradise without any reckoning and accountability]. He said, "For they used not to treat themselves with branding (cauterization) nor recite necromantic (magic) chants [to put evil spell on people to harm them], and not to see evil omen in things, and they used to put their trust [only] in their Lord". Upon hearing that, 'Ukasha bin Mihsan got up and said (to the Prophet), "Please invoke God to make me one of them". He said, "O God! Make him one of them". Then another man got up and said (to the Prophet), "Please invoke God to make me one of them also". He said, "Ukasha has preceded you". (Narrated by *Hadith* collection *Sahih Bukhari* on the authority of Abdullah ibn Abbas [May God be pleased with him])

Abu Dharr (May God be pleased with him) narrated that Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said, "[Archangel] Gabriel came to me from the direction of Harrah (a dormant volcanic desert region in the north-west Arabia) and said, 'Convey the glad tidings to your nation that one who dies in such a state that one has not attributed any partners with God, such a one will enter into the Paradise'. I asked him, 'Even though one has done theft and fornication?' Gabriel said, 'Yes even though one has done theft and fornication'". This question and answer were repeated thrice. (Narrated by *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*) In the narration of Abu Dharr (May God be pleased with him), Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) recited this verse:

وَلِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِۦ جَنَّتَانِ

"One who has feared standing before one's Lord, there are two Paradises [for such a person]." (Qur'an, Chapter 55, Verse 46)

According to another prophetic tradition, during an expedition, encampments were done where later a little boy was found. That day was extremely hot. Suddenly a woman came out of a tent running towards that child where he was standing. Her family was right behind her. The woman lifted her child and embraced him tightly. She then laid

down on the rocky surface and embraced her child again to protect him from the heat and started to say, 'My son! My son!" People started to weep upon seeing this [intense motherly love and affection for her child]. People then went away. Meanwhile, Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) came and people informed him about this. He was delighted by their compassion and mercy. He then gave them the glad tidings and said, "Are you surprised at the outpouring of compassion and mercy from this woman to her child?" People said, "Yes indeed that is the matter". He said, "God is more compassionate and merciful to all of you than this woman is to her child". Then people went about their ways with tremendous happiness and magnificent glad tidings [about Divine love, mercy, and compassion for all]. (Narrated by *Hadith* collections *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* on the authority of Umar [May God be pleased with him])

These traditions and what we have explained in the "Book of Hope" (Chapter 13), impart us with the glad tidings of the immensity and expansiveness of Divine Mercy. We hope that God will not have the dealing with us that we are deserving of [due to our own faults, weaknesses, wrongdoings, transgressions, excesses, and oppressions], rather He will deal with us in a way that is worthy of His Magnificence and Majesty, replete with His benevolence, grace, mercy, and largesse.

Chapter 21 – Wisdom for Liberating Oneself to Find Inner Peace, Tranquility and Happiness Irrespective of Time, Place and Situation

At the conclusion of the final book of the fourth and final volume of Ghazali's *magnum opus* "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God", it is worth looking into the key points of spiritual struggle for inner transformation to attain resilience, positivity, inner peace, tranquility, eternal happiness and endless triumph. For this purpose, Ghazali's timeless wisdom will be leveraged here again in the form of an important narration that explains the way of achieving the real purpose of life. Ghazali mentions this narration in his book "*Ayyuhal Walad*" or "My Dear Beloved Son" which is present in Ghazali's three-volume collection of short books "*Majmu'a Rasa-il Imam Ghazali*" or "Collection of Short Books by Imam Ghazali" as follows [27]:

It is said that among the students and *Mureed*s (disciples who seek spiritual perfection and enlightenment through the attainment of purification of their souls from all evil desires and tendencies, under the guidance of a spiritual guide, who has in turn completely attained this purification of the soul and high station before God through training, guidance, and proximity of another spiritual guide) of Shaykh Shaqeeq Balkhi (May God have mercy upon him), was a student and disciple named Hatim al-Asm (May God have mercy upon him, who in turn became a great spiritual master later on through the spiritual training and guidance of Shaykh Shaqeeq). One day Shaykh Shaqeeq Balkhi (May God have mercy upon him) said to him:

"O Hatim! For how long have been in my company (spiritual proximity) and have been listening to what I have been saying (teaching)?"

Hatim al-Asm (May God have mercy upon him) replied: "Thirty-three years!"

Shaykh Shaqeeq Balkhi asked:

"In that [long] time period, what benefit have you derived from me?"

Hatim al-Asm (May God have mercy upon him) responded:

"[I have] obtained eight benefits [from you]."

Shaykh Shaqeeq Balkhi (May God have mercy upon him) responded:

"*Inna Lillahi Wa Inna Ilaeyhe Raji'oon*."

"To God we belong and to Him shall we return (it's a supplication from Qur'an that is made at times of loss and grief)."

Shaykh Shaqeeq Balkhi (May God have mercy upon him) then said:

"O Hatim! I have spent my lifetime in teaching and training, and you have just gained eight benefits from me?"

Hatim al-Asm (May God have mercy upon him) replied:

"O my teacher! If you asked [me] for the truth, then the reality is what I [just] told you. I do not need any more [benefits] and these benefits from knowledge are quite sufficient because I am certain that I will attain salvation [and success] in this life and in the life in the Hereafter through these eight benefits."

Shaykh Shaqeeq Balkhi (May God have mercy upon him) asked him:

"All right! Tell me, what are those eight benefits?"

BENEFITS NARRATED BY HATIM AL-ASM

"O my teacher! The **first benefit** is that I looked at the people of this world and saw that everyone has a beloved. But these beloveds of the people [of the world] are such that some of them (i.e., the beloveds) are with them until their illness that brings death, some of them are with them until death, some of them are with them until they reach their graves, and after burial all the beloveds return from there. None of their beloveds go with them in their graves to live with them there and to provide their company [in the darkness, solitude, narrowness, and horror of the grave]. I contemplated on this and said to myself that only that is a good beloved who goes with them in the grave and lives with his/her lover, who will provide the company, who will illuminate the grave, who will be a partner on the Day of Judgment and its destinations (stations that one goes through after burial until the Day of Judgment). I saw that the only beloved who has these [good] qualities is my good (pious and righteous) deeds. After this [determination and awareness], I made my good deed my beloved so that it goes with me in my grave

[when I die], will provide me with its company, will become an illuminated candle in my grave, will be my partner in all stages of life Hereafter, and never ever separate away from me."

Shaykh Shaqeeq Balkhi (May God have mercy upon him) said:

"Well done O Hatim! You have told a very good thing. Now narrate the second benefit."

"O my teacher! The **second benefit** is that I glanced at the people of the world and saw that everyone was following after the pleasures and desires from the *Nafs* (lower self that instructs one to commit evil) and [everyone] is subservient to the desires from the lower self. Upon seeing that, I deliberated on the following holy verse [from Qur'an]:

وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِۦ وَنَهَى ٱلنَّفْسَ عَنِ ٱلْهَوَىٰ ﴿٤٠﴾

فَإِنَّ ٱلْجَنَّةَ هِىَ ٱلْمَأْوَىٰ ﴿٤١﴾

'But the one who has stood in fear of one's Sustainer's Presence and restrained one's inner self from the base (low and evil) desires, Paradise will the place of rest [for this person].' (Qur'an, Chapter 79, Verses 40-41)

I developed the certitude that the wise Qur'an is correct, and the book of God is the truth. Then I established a front against my *Nafs* (lower self) and became determined to oppose it. I molded it (i.e., my lower self) in such a shape that I did not fulfill any of its desires until it started to find peace [and satisfaction] in the worship of God, the Exalted."

Shaykh Shaqeeq Balkhi (May God have mercy upon him) responded:

"May God, the Exalted, provide His blessings in your good deeds. Now narrate the third benefit."

"O my teacher! The **third benefit** is that when I glanced at the people, I saw that every person, with great pain and hard work, is busy in accumulating the possessions (money, wealth, goods) of this mortal world and is very happy that one has a lot of goods and material possessions. But when I contemplated on the following holy verse from the bounteous Qur'an:

مَا عِندَكُمْ يَنفَدُ ۖ وَمَا عِندَ ٱللَّهِ بَاقٍ ۗ

'All that is with you is bound to come to an end, whereas all that, which is with God is everlasting.' (Qur'an, Chapter 16, Verse 96)

Then whatever [material possessions] I accumulated in the world, I spent it all in Way of God by distributing it among pious indigents and beggars so that it (the material possessions that I distributed in the Way of God) will get deposited with God, the Exalted, as my trust and will become source of immense good and ransom (i.e., salvation) in the life Hereafter."

Shaykh Shaqeeq Balkhi (May God have mercy upon him) said:

"O Hatim! May God grant you His Compensation (reward for your spending in His Way)! You said a very good thing and have done a very good thing. Now narrate the fourth benefit."

"O my teacher! The **fourth benefit** is that I looked at the people of the world and saw that some of them think that grandeur and honor belong to the nation or tribe (group) that is big and powerful, that's why, they are expressing pride in their tribe (nation or group). Some of them are such that they think that the grandeur is obtained through abundance of wealth, [material] possessions, family, and relatives, that's why, [some] people are expressing their pride in their wealth and children. Some [people] are such that they think that their grandeur and honor is in displaying anger, beating, killing, murder and pillage and they express their pride in that. Some [people] are such that they think that their grandeur is in wasteful spending, that's why, they consider their wasteful spending a source of honor and express their pride in that. But I deliberated on this verse in which God, the Exalted, says:

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ ۚ

'Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most deeply conscious [and fearful] of Him.' (Qur'an, Chapter 49, Verse 13)

Therefore, this is correct and is the truth, and the creations' thoughts are false and wrong conjectures. That's why, I adopted *Taqwa* (pious reverence, consciousness, awe, and fear of God) so that I get counted as the one with the highest rank in the sight of God, the Exalted."

Shaykh Shaqeeq Balkhi (May God have mercy upon him) said:

"O Hatim! May God be pleased with you. You have said a very good thing. Now narrate the fifth benefit."

"O my teacher! The **fifth benefit** is that I looked at the people who were complaining about each other. It was found that they were doing all this because of envy, jealousy, and enmity and the main cause of that is [the desire and competition for] greatness, grandeur, [material] possessions, wealth, and knowledge. I contemplated on the following verse from the Holy Qur'an in which it's said:

نَحْنُ قَسَمْنَا بَيْنَهُم مَّعِيشَتَهُمْ فِي ٱلْحَيَوٰةِ ٱلدُّنْيَا

'It is We who distribute their means of livelihood (sustenance) among them in the life of this world.' (Qur'an, Chapter 43, Verse 32)

Then I thought that God, the Blessed and Exalted, has appointed the possessions and ranks since the first beginning [of the creation] and no one has any control [or say] in this matter. Therefore, I did not compete or had jealousy with anyone and remained agreed to God's distribution [of worldly bounties among all people of the world] and [His appointed] destiny and got along [well] with the whole world [by giving up all jealousies and enmities against all of God's creations]."

Shaykh Shaqeeq Balkhi (May God have mercy upon him) said:

"O Hatim! You are saying the truth and you are doing the right thing. Now narrate the sixth benefit."

"O my teacher! The **sixth benefit** is that when I glanced at the people, I saw that every person is having enmity with someone else for some reason. Then I deliberated on the following verse:

إِنَّ ٱلشَّيْطَٰنَ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ فَٱتَّخِذُوهُ عَدُوًّا

'Verily, *Shaytan* (Satan) is your enemy so treat him as your enemy.' (Qur'an, Chapter 35, Verse 6)

After that, I developed the certitude that God's saying is the truth, I should not have any enmity with anyone other than *Shaytan* (Satan). Since then, I considered Satan as my enemy and did not obey any of his orders. Instead, I developed obedience [of God] and followed the commandments of God, the Exalted and adopted only His worship and

servitude. The correct way is the *Sirat al-Mustaqeem* (the straight path of Divine guidance in which there is no crookedness) as God, the Exalted, has Himself said:

أَلَمْ أَعْهَدْ إِلَيْكُمْ يَٰبَنِىٓ ءَادَمَ أَن لَّا تَعْبُدُوا۟ ٱلشَّيْطَٰنَ ۖ إِنَّهُۥ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ

'Have I not obtained this promise from you that O you the Children of Adam! Never ever obey the *Shaytan* (Satan). No doubt, he is your avowed (open) enemy and worship Me alone [because] this is the straight path.'" (Qur'an, Chapter 36, Verse 60)

Shaykh Shaqeeq Balkhi (May God have mercy upon him) said: "O Hatim! You did a very good thing and said a very good thing. Now narrate the seventh benefit."

"O my teacher! The **seventh benefit** is that I looked at the people and saw that every person is preoccupied with one's livelihood and search for sustenance and is involved in an intense struggle. In this regards, one is not even differentiating between *Halal* (permissible) and *Haram* (forbidden) but instead, is getting humiliated with doubtful and *Haram* (forbidden) earnings. Then I deliberated on the following verse:

وَمَا مِن دَآبَّةٍ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ إِلَّا عَلَى ٱللَّهِ رِزْقُهَا

'And there is no living creature on earth whose sustenance is not the responsibility of God.' (Qur'an, Chapter 11, Verse 6)

Then I developed the certitude that the wise Qur'an is the truth and is correct and that I am also among those living creatures [of God] that are present on earth. So thus, I got engaged in the worship of God and developed the certitude that He will bring to me [my] sustenance because He has promised [to provide me with] sustenance."

Shaykh Shaqeeq Balkhi (May God have mercy upon him) said:

"You did a very good thing and told a very good thing. Now narrate the eighth benefit."

"O my teacher! The **eighth benefit** is that when I looked at the people, I found that every person's reliance [or trust] is on someone or something. Some have trust [or rely] on their [material] possessions, some trust [or rely] on other people. Therefore, I pondered on this holy verse in which God, the Blessed and Exalted, says:

وَمَن يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُۥٓ

'And for everyone who places one's trust in God, He [alone] is enough [for one].' (Qur'an, Chapter 65, Verse 3)

‘*Wa Huwa Husbi Wa Nai’mal Wakeel*.’

‘And He is sufficient for me and He is the best Helper.’

[Therefore, I adopted complete reliance and trust in God in every matter.]”

When Shaykh Shaqeeq Balkhi (May God have mercy upon him) heard these [eight] benefits, he said:

“O Hatim! May God grant you His *Tawfeeq* (i.e., enable you to do righteous deeds and to walk on His Path). You have told very good things. I have seen in *Taurat* (Torah), *Injil* (Gospel of Jesus [Peace and blessings of God be upon him]), *Zabur* (Psalms), and in the praiseworthy differentiator between right and wrong (i.e., the Holy Qur’an), that all these books [of God] mention these eight benefits, i.e., all four books in their teachings have told [us] these eight benefits. Whoever acts on these [eight principles] is like as if one has acted on all four [holy] books.”

Part 4: Spiritual Path to Perfection of the Inner Being and Realization of the Purpose of Life through Rumi's Fable of Three Princes

Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi (1207-1273 A.D.), popularly known as Rumi, wrote a masterpiece of spirituality, the inner spiritual path, Gnosis and Divine love in his six-volumes poetic collection in Persian known as "*Mathnavi-e-Ma'navi*" or "Couplets of Deep Spiritual Meanings", popularly known as "*Mathnavi*" or "*Masnavi*" which is the most epic poetry on the subject, of the entire human civilization. Towards the end of this masterpiece, he summarized the entire spiritual path in the form of a fable about three princes who embarked on a journey to meet with the Emperor of China to marry his daughter who was known for her unparalleled beauty. Rumi narrated the story of the first two princes and left the story of the third prince unfinished and hence leaving "*Mathnavi*" unfinished saying:

When the sun has set from the horizon of the heart [1]

Mathnavi has ended [unfinished] and God knows the best.

Rumi further predicted:

The remainder [of the story of the three princes] will come into the heart of a person, without being spoken to,

Who possesses a living (enlightened) soul.

[1] This is an indication that the subject matter of this masterpiece "*Mathnavi*" was Divinely inspired on Rumi's heart. Since that has stopped after writing six volumes, it's a Divine signal to him that it is time to leave the book unfinished. This was further elaborated by his son Maulana Baha-ul-Millat (his real name was Baha al-Din Walad but popularly known as Sultan Walad) who added his own concluding verses of poetry at the end the book saying that his father has predicted: "The remainder [of the story of the three princes] will come into the heart of a person, without being spoken to, who possesses a living (enlightened) soul". As per Rumi's prediction, several enlightened souls were inspired with the conclusion of "*Mathnavi*". Of that, one conclusion by Maulana Ilahi Baksh Kandehlavi, a saint from India, is considered the closest in line with this great masterpiece as it concludes it in the same vein as Rumi continued in six volumes, and beautifully concluded the story of three princes along with another story that Rumi left unfinished about three brothers whose father left an inheritance in the care of a *Qadi* (judge) asking him to bequeath his inheritance to the son who is laziest of all. This last section of this present book will capture Rumi's unfinished story of the three princes, the conclusion of his son Maulana Baha-ul-Millat about why his father left the "*Mathnavi*" unfinished, and the final conclusion of "*Mathnavi*" by Maulana Ilahi Baksh Kandehlavi as he concluded the story and the book when he was Divinely inspired to do so as foretold by Rumi.

The story of three princes from the last part of "*Mathnavi*" along with the completion of this story as predicted by Rumi, is presented here to summarize the path one must take for inner perfection, spiritual transformation, attainment of the real purpose of life and consequent eternal happiness and endless triumph [28]:

Tradition of an Emperor and His Advice to His Three Sons to Travel to Various Parts of the Dominion and Giving them Specific Instructions on Administration and Setups and Directed Them to Not Go to a Particular Castle and to Not Even Go Around it

There was an emperor who had three sons

All three were sensible and wise.

Every one of them was praiseworthy

In generosity, warfare, and magnificence.

All of them stood before the emperor

They were the coolness of emperor's eyes.

From the eyes of the son, there is a secret path

Father's date palm tree pulls water from that secret path [to irrigate it].

To the extent that the water from son's stream

Flows into the gardens of the father and the mother.

The gardens of the parents remain fresh and irrigated

From the eyes of the progeny whence flow the secret streams.

When this stream [flowing from the progeny to parents] weakens due to [progeny's] illness

The date palm's branches and leaves become dried up.

The dryness of the date palm says clearly

The tree extracts water [of life and well-being] from the progeny.

Likewise, many secret streams

O negligent! Are attached to your soul [to irrigate your tree of existence].

O you who has been addressed here! Materials have been pulled from the heaven and the earth

To the extent that your body has been formed out of them.[2]

You have stolen the body from the components of the world

You have cut piece by piece from here and there.

From earth, sun, and heaven

You have affixed those pieces [from the world], onto the body and the soul.

Be warned! Do you think you will get away [for doing that] for free?

This and that will not be taken back from you?

Stolen goods are not long lasting

They can take the thieves to the place where they get hanged.

This [body] is made up of borrowed material, one should not ground one's feet [as if body is permanent][3]

Because what you have borrowed, ought to be returned.

Except for "I breathed into human being My spirit"[4] *(soul) as it has come from God*

[You better] Belong to the soul as everything else is useless.

I am calling them useless in relation to the soul

Otherwise, it (body or material being of human beings) has also been made by a strong Creator.[5]

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[2] The composition of the human body is made up of many materials from the world.
[3] Body will need to be returned back to the earth one day when the life ends as it is made of material borrowed from the earth and borrowed material must necessarily be returned back to where they came from, except for the soul that is not made up of borrowed material and has heavenly Divine origin.
[4] Verse from Quran (15:29) that points to the heavenly origin of the soul and its intimate connection with God.
[5] Hence, body is not useless and it has been created for a Divinely-ordained purpose such as, to be a companion of the soul in this earthly existence and help the soul find its way back to its heavenly origin into the proximity, love and intimacy of God in a life of eternal happiness and everlasting success.

The Three Princes Heading to Various Countries in the Dominion of Their Father Who Bade Farewell to them and Repeated His Advice to not go into the Mind-blowing Castle

All three sons with firm intention decided to tread the path to embark on the journey

Towards the countries of their father emperor.

In the tour of their cities and castles

To oversee the administration and to strategize for increased income.

At the time of their intention to tread the [arduous] path, they sought emperor's permission

Since he saw firm resolve in them, he grated them the permission.

They kissed emperor's hand who bade them farewell

Then emperor king said to them.

Wherever your hearts' desire to go, make your intention [to go there]

In God's protection, forge ahead.

Except for the one castle that is termed 'mind-blowing'

As it makes life constricted for the aspirants of the crown.

For God's sake, from this castle laden with pictures

Stay away and be afraid of the danger.

On its front, back, arches, ceiling, and floor

All are full of pictures, engravings, and forms.

Like Zulaikha's house that was full of her pictures

So that [Prophet] Joseph would be forced to look at her.[6]

Since Joseph did not look towards her

[6] Zulaikha put her pictures all over her house to entice Prophet Joseph who would not even look at her, to force him to look.

She cunningly filled the entire home with her pictures everywhere.

So, wherever that beautiful face (Joseph) would look

Would unwittingly see her face.

For the possessors of enlightened eyes, the One and Only God

Made the six directions, a manifestation of His proof [of existence, immensity, magnificence, and grandeur].

So that whichever animal and thing that grows they look at

They will find nourishment from the Gardens of the Divine Beauty.[7]

That's why, He told this group [of enlightened eyes and souls]

Wherever you will turn, you will see His Countenance.

If they drink water from a cup out of thirst

They see God in the water.

One is not a lover, who sees in water

O you who has insight! One's own face.

When the face of the lover annihilated in Him

Tell me, who such a one sees in the water?

On the face of the heavenly companion, they see the Beauty of God

Just like the reflection of moon in water, as it's a masterpiece of the One Who does not like any co-sharers in love[8].

God's disliking of having co-sharers in His love, is only for the lover and the truthful

This disliking is not for the Satan and the cattle.

---

[7] When saints, Gnostics and intimates of God witness the Divine perfection and excellence in the universe, their Gnosis and Divine knowledge increases as it serves to deepen their certitude beyond all shadows of doubt and disbelief, just like the rising sun that annihilates the darkness.

[8] Sincere lovers of God never intend beautiful heavenly companions, instead in that beauty too, they witness the Divine Beauty. Their intention is for Him alone unadulterated with any co-sharers in their love for Him alone. Since a Gnostic and intimate of God is a beloved of God, therefore the Divine disliking of having any co-sharers in His love requires that the beloved does not look at anyone other than God.

Even if Satan becomes a lover [of God], he will win the bet

He will become [Archangel] Gabriel and Satan will die.

"Satan became a Muslim" manifested in that place

Where Yazid became Bayazid by His Kindness and Largesse[9].

There is no end to this matter [that amounts to an everlasting treasure], O the group [with enlightened eyes and soul]!

Beware! Protect your faces from that [mind-blowing] castle.

Beware! Let not the greed lead you astray

So that you fell into eternal damnation.

It is incumbent upon everyone to protect oneself from danger

Listen to this sincere advice from me.

In search for ease, it is better for the intellect in the head to be sharp

Prevention is better than the narrow and dark hideout of tribulation.

If that father had not said that

And had he not asked them to protect themselves from that castle.

They would not have forged ahead towards that castle themselves

Their own inclination would not have been towards it.

Because it was unknown and deserted

It was distant from other castles and pathways.

Since he prohibited them from it, their hearts with that talk

Fell into greed and in the alley of thoughts.

This prohibition evoked in their hearts the desire

[9] Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said about Satan: "[…like everyone else, there is also a Satan with me] but God helped me [against him] and hence he became a Muslim (one who submits to the Will of God)". Rumi says: "This prophetic tradition actually means that even if Satan repents, he will become a Gnostic just like a cruel oppressor like Yazid could become a Gnostic like Bayazid [al-Bustami – a great saint, Gnostic and intimate of God], upon repentance, making amends and traversing the Divine Path by the Divine largesse.

To investigate the reality of that secret.

Who is it, who stays away from the thing stopped from?

Instead, human being is greedy for the forbidden things.

Those of pious awe, reverence, and fear of God, become averse to things forbidden from

For people of desires of the lower self, prohibition becomes an incentive.

That's why, it has been said: "Many are led astray through it"

It's there because the awakened ones are guided by it[10].

Princes said they will provide services

We will act on "We heard and we obeyed".

We will not deviate from your command

To be heedless of your favors is tantamount to disbelief.

But they did not say "InshaAllah" (If God Wills) and did not glorify Him

Because they depended on themselves, the Divine favors were separate from them.

The purpose of all the paths is just one abode

These thousands of grains have come from one grain[11].

The variegated typed of food items

Are all one thing if you look deeply into it.

When you get satiated with one food item

Fifty other food items become useless for you.

In your hunger, you have started to see multiplicity in one thing

That you consider as thousands[12].

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[10] Qur'an has this quality that many with darkened hearts are misguided by it and those with awakened and informed hearts are guided by it as attested to by Qur'an itself.

[11] Since people from all over the world turn to Ka'ba for prayers, there is unity in them as their end goal is the same. Thousands of grains are born out of one grain, hence there is unity in them due to having the same origin.

[12] The variegated forms manifested in Divine creations dispersed all around us, appear as multiplicity even though

The Emperor's Sons Head to the Castle because it is Human Nature to Become Greedy for Things Prohibited from. They Totally Disregarded Father's Advice and Fell into a Ditch of Tribulations and their Reproaching Selves were Saying, "Did a Forewarner not Come to you?", and They Said Weeping and Ashamed, "If We Had been Listening and Understanding, We Would not Have been Among the Denizens of Hell"

This topic knows no bounds; that group [of sons]

Took the path to the [forbidden] castle.

They arrived near the forbidden tree

And came out of the circle of the sincere ones.

In violation of the command of the venerable emperor

They forged ahead to the castle that destroyed the patience and blew the senses.

They arrived against the advice of the advising intellect

They turned away from the day to the dark night.

Towards the castle replete with beautiful pictures

Five doors were towards the ocean and five towards the land.

Five were like the external senses of the color and smell

Five were like the inner senses to search for the truth[13].

Due to thousands of those pictures and artworks

They were going around happily and impetuously [to see one artistic masterpiece after another].

Don't be intoxicated by the wine glasses of pictures[14]

---

they point to One and the Only Creator, to someone who does not have the inner eye to see the reality.

[13] Five external doors are like the five external human senses, five internal doors are like five inner senses. Under the influence of these senses, human beings sometimes, lose their intellect. Likewise, those who entered through these doors into the castle, lost their mind and intellect. Such was the characteristic of these doors leading into the mind-blowing castle.

[14] Outer shapes and forms that are visible to an external eye without knowing their reality.

So that you do not become an idol maker or worshipper [concerned with the outer form only].

Pass beyond the wine glasses of pictures and forms, don't stop at them

Wine is in the wine glass but not from it[15].

Open your ears wide towards the One who bestowed this wine

So you can hear the voice and sounds from there.

The One without form, creates in you astonishment

One without tools, creates innumerable tools.

One without hands, creates hands

The Soul of the soul makes human being into an artist[16].

Does the Influencer (God) has any resemblance with the influence?

Do sounds and weeping have any resemblance with sorrow?

Weeping is a form and sorrow [that begets weeping] is without form

Man bites his hands out of sorrow that does not have any hands.

O you the narrator of evidence! These examples are not suitable

It is just a weak attempt to explain it to all[17].

The creative abilities of the One without form, creates form

Creates the body with senses and tools.

So that whatever form one finds agreeable

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[15] No doubt, the beauty of these external forms produces a wine like intoxication. However, this beauty is not their own but rather it is borrowed. You should turn to the Real Beauty – the One who bestows beauty to these forms. In the wine glasses of their external forms, is the wine of the Divine Beauty. Pay attention to that then you will experience spiritual illumination on your heart. When you find the wine of the Divine love, you will not be restricted to outer forms as every atom of this universe will become a manifestation of God.

[16] The [Divine] Being without tools and forms, creates innumerable forms and tools [in the form of creations around us]. The Being who is above having physical hands, created innumerable hands. The Being of God who is the Soul of all the souls, created the artist in human beings, hence He is the Real One, the Origin and Originator of everything with form.

[17] God who is the Influencer and the universe that is His influence, these are just some examples of that. The One without form, creates multitudes of creations with form.

Would bring the body into [the state of being] good or bad[18].

If it's the form of a blessing, one becomes grateful

If there is delay [in getting a blessing], one becomes patient.

If it's the form of mercy and kindness, one becomes happy

If it's the form of sorrow, one becomes sad.

If it's the form of a city, one travels towards it

If it's a form of an arrow, one picks up a shield.

If it's the form of beautiful people, one enjoys it

If it's the form from the unseen realm, one adopts solitude.

If it's the form of a need, one goes towards earning [a living or trade]

If it's the form of one's physical strength, it creates snatching and usurping.

It is outside the bounds of any limits and estimations

Making people do things by means of different ideas and thoughts[19].

The innumerable religions and professions

All are the shadows of the form of thoughts and ideas.

A group is standing at the upper level [of a building]

See the shadow of every one of them on the ground[20].

The form of the thought is at the lofty upper level

And the resulting action is like their shadow manifested on the limbs.

Actions are on the limbs, however, thoughts that drive the limbs, are hidden

---

[18] God has created the forms and faces so that they do good or bad to the body in consonance with their inner states.
[19] It is outside the bounds of any estimation the innumerable types of thoughts and ideas that become impetus and drivers of various human actions, endeavors and undertakings that are both good and bad.
[20] In order to realize how thoughts are the causes and actions are the effects of these causes, one should consider the example of people standing on the upper level of a building casting shadows on the ground beneath that level. Likewise, the form of thoughts is at the upper level and actions are like shadows cast on human limbs.

But both of them are connected in bringing out the effect in unison.

The consequences of the forms of various food

Is the power and strength that is without any form.

When these forms are subservient to the One without form

Why are some engaged in rejecting Him?

These forms owe their existence to One without form

Then why one with form, rejects such a One who brought one into existence in the first place?

The form of every home's ceiling and walls

Is the shadow of the contemplation of the architect.

Even though the place where thought and contemplation happen

Is not apparent in the stone, wood, and brick [of the building].

The Absolute Doer of everything is certainly without form

Form is like a tool in His hand.

The One without form, sometimes from behind the veil

Reveals Himself out of Divine largesse to the ones with form[21].

So that every form seeks His help

Through His Perfection, Beauty and Omnipotent Power.

When the One without form concealed Himself [from all with forms]

Those people descended to the level of color and smell as a charity[22].

Search for the One without form through humble beseeching and weeping for Him and by means of annihilation in His being

Since nothing will come to you except forms by means of thinking.

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[21] Divine illuminations flash on some receptive hearts like thunderbolts of lightning.

[22] When Divine illuminations stop, people return to the necessities of being human. Perfection is to be attained only from the One without form. One form trying to achieve [spiritual] perfection from another form is misguidance except for the intimates of God and Gnostics whom God has chosen for the guidance of humanity. Otherwise, form is needy itself; to present the need to another form does not make sense.

If you don't have the inner happiness without the form

Then whatever form is perceived by you is better for you[23].

The city you are advancing towards

O traveler! You are pulled towards it by means of a desire that is without form.

Inwardly, in reality you are going towards desire that is without time, place, and form

Because happiness [in fulfilment of desire] is without time and place, even though you are unaware of this objective.

In reality, God is the Lord of everyone

Because treading the path is due to desire[24].

However, some have turned towards the tail

Even though head is the real thing, on which everything depends but they have lost the head.

However, head is lost for the misguided

But He gives by means of tail what should have been given by means of head.

One is bestowed through head, another one is bestowed though tail

Others have lost both the feet and the head.

Since everything was lost, they found everything

Because of this loss, they ran towards everything[25].

---

[23] Even if after spiritual striving, you cannot conjure Him without a form, then make use of whatever form comes in front of you [that represents Him] without your imagination as an alternative until you are able to conjure Him without form.

[24] Since it has been proven in aforementioned that desire is the objective of all human endeavors and treading of all paths is due to desire and granting the desire is God's function, hence God is the Lord of everyone.

[25] Different worshippers and seekers of God have different dealings with Him. Some have turned their attention to God's actions even though the real objective is His Being (*Dhaat*), since that is the real existence and is the origin of everything that is a contingent being. They also get benefit from His Being and their attention is also Divinely accepted. Another group of worshippers have their attention and seeking of truth by means of actions of truth and righteousness. This is the level of ordinary worshippers. "Tail" here refers to the acts of God. "Head" refers to the qualities of God. Another group of worshipper [at a higher level of spirituality] get spiritual benefits through Divine

In that Picture-Laden Castle, Princes Saw the Picture of the Daughter of the Chinese Emperor, and All of them Falling Unconscious and Getting Inflicted with Trials and Tribulations and Starting to Investigate Whose Picture that is

There is no end to this matter, this group [of three princes]

Saw a beautiful and magnificent picture.

They had seen more beautiful ones

But [with that picture] they descended into a fathomless ocean [of love].

Because they received the opium through this cup

Cup was seen but opium was concealed[26].

The mind-blowing castle did its job

It put them in the deep well of tribulation.

The arrow of beauty and style penetrated their hearts

O the Bestower of Peace! Grant us refuge from this boundless misery.

The lifeless picture burned them from within

It set a blazing fire in their faith and hearts.

If the picture had soul, then what would have happened?

Its tribulation would have been a different kind every second.

Since the love of the picture in the hearts of the princes

Was hurting like a dagger.

Every one of them was profusely shedding tears like a cloud

---

qualities referred to here as "head". This level belongs to the [spiritual] elites. The next higher level of spirituality belongs to the elites of the elites or the foremost of the foremost ("*As-Sabiqoon As-Sabiqoon*" as referred to by Qur'an in chapter called "*al-Waqi'ah*" (56:10)) since they pay attention only to the Being of God and draw benefits directly from Him without any means. Since they did not make Divine actions or qualities their objective, instead they made the Divine Being their objective and hence, they attained to the Divine Being.

[26] Beauty has been resembled here with opium. Cup here refers to outer form or physical looks. Forms are visible but their opium (mesmerizing influence) is concealed. The mind-blowing castle did its job by putting the three princes in tribulation.

Each one of them bit their hand and said "Alas!"[27]

What we are seeing now, the emperor had already seen before

That unparalleled one gave us so many admonitions.

That's why prophets have a lot of rights [over us]

As they have clearly informed us of all the consequences [of our actions].

That what you are sowing now, nothing will grow out of it except thorns

Where you are flying towards now, you will not find a place to fly to[28].

Take the seed from me so that it gives you profuse produce

Fly with my wings so that the arrow of tribulation falls off before striking you[29].

You do not feel the need of following them

In the end, you will also say that it was necessary to have done that.

When they said "you", it is you but not the "you" that is body

Instead, it is the "you" that is above the material realm and is the real "you"[30].

The outer "you" that you think of as "you"

Is from the [six] directions but the real "you" is above all directions.

O pearl! Why do you tremble over the shell?

Do not consider the "you" as you but consider what's in it as real "you"[31].

---

[27] They were full of regrets upon realizing what they were seeing and experiencing then, that was already seen by the emperor who vociferously and insistently admonished them to not go to this castle.

[28] Prophets of God already informed us that following the desires, passions and lusts from the lower self (*Nafs*) will only cause thorns (misfortunes, pain and suffering) to grow. Your direction and speed are towards worldliness, there is no salvation, real success and true happiness in it.

[29] Prophets have informed us that we should follow their way as there are innumerable [both material and immaterial] benefits in doing that and the arrow of trials and tribulation will fall well short of striking you.

[30] There are two parts of "you" – one is your body and the other one is your soul. The following of the prophets that is beneficial is not the function of the body, rather it's a function of the soul that is above the limitations of time and space.

[31] You tremble over the end of the body (death) even though it's just the outer shell. Real "you" is the soul that is the pearl in the shell.

It is the "you" that makes you oblivious to yourself

Achieve your "you" and pass over the duality [in yourself][32].

Your real "you" over your outer "you"

Has come to warn it and to attain to the Divine nearness.

Your real "you" is buried in your other "you"

I am the slave of the person who sees one's real "you".

We set aside the command of our father

We became rebellious to his boundless generosity.

We considered emperor's advice as insignificant

Along with his unparalleled largesse.

We have all now fallen into a ditch

We are crestfallen and injured without a war.

We depended on our intellect and wisdom

Until we got inflicted with this tribulation.

The shade of a [spiritual] guide is better than Divine remembrance

One contentment is better than thousands of meals and dishes[33].

A seeing eye is better than three hundred and sixty sticks

Such an eye differentiates between a pearl and pebble.

Due to the sorrow, we got involved in a [never ending] struggle

In this world, whose magnificent picture is this?

They forged ahead in their journey [with this inner state] and after much struggle [in untangling the mystery]

[32] Reach your real "you" which is your soul and stop this duality of considering your body as your reality.

[33] Keeping company with the spiritual guide, engenders sincerity [and truthfulness of purpose] and ability to forge ahead on the spiritual path without falling into any of its pitfalls. It also is a condition for making Divine remembrance effective and instilling contentment and patience in the spiritual traveler and is better than thousands of meals of Divine remembrance.

A spiritual guide with deep insight, revealed this secret to them.

The guide did not know the reality by hearsay, instead the knowledge was by means of an inner Divine illumination

Because this secret was not anything that could be uncovered by removing some veils.

He said the picture was enviable even for the most beautiful one.

It is the picture of the princess of China.

The King of China has a daughter who is unparalleled

In personal traits, excellences, and outer beauty.

She is concealed like a fairy and soul

She is in the concealing veils of the castle.

Not a man or a woman has a way towards her

The king has concealed her to protect her from all hardships and tribulations.

Even hearing her name from anyone's lips gets the king worked up

Not even a bird could flip a feather where the princess lived.

That herd is doomed that is inflicted with such love

May God not allow such a love to inflict anyone.

It is a punishment for the one who sowed the seed of foolishness

And deemed sound advice counterfeit and insignificant.

Such a one depended on one's own strategizing

Thinking that one would wade through [all situations] with one's own intellect.

Half a particle of attention [of a spiritual guide] is better

Through which the plan of the intellect is protected three hundred times.

O leader! Leave your own planning

Step forward with focus and give up your soul happily[34].

This is not equal to a few deliberations your intellect has come up with

Unless and until you are annihilated [in the being of the spiritual guide], these deliberations are of no use.

You will not take advantage [of the spiritual guide] unless you are annihilated [in the being of the spiritual guide]

Go get this annihilation and take advantage of the being of the spiritual guide.

The Three Princes Investigating the Incident Further and the Conversation of the Oldest Brother

All three inflicted with this tribulation, turned to each other

All three had the same pain, sadness, and sorrow.

All three were the companions of the same contemplation and thought

All three were ill from the same illness and sorrow.

In silence, all three had the same thought

In conversation, all three had the same argument.

At times, all three were the ones shedding tears

On the table of tribulation, they were the ones sprinkling blood.

At times, all three, due to the raging fire of the heart

Took breaths like the burning of the fireplace.

The oldest one said: O brothers!

Were we not men in admonishing each other?

From among the people of our dominion, whoever complained to us

[34] Abandon your own planning and forge ahead to the attention of the spiritual guide. Annihilate (*Fana*) your own planning in the guidance of the true spiritual guide whose attention is far more beneficial than your limited planning.

About hardship, fear, poverty, and earthquake.

We used to tell such a one to not be disheartened by such constrictions

Exercise patience as patience is the key to expansiveness.

Where has this key of patience gone?

Alas what a surprise! Has the law become abrogated? What happened?

Did we not used to say that in a situation of conflict?

Laugh abundantly even if inside a fire.

We advised every soldier in combat

Beware! The color on your face should not change.

We commanded our soldiers

To forge ahead like a spear to dominate.

We told the whole world the whereabouts of patience

Because patience has forever been an illuminated lamp and a guiding light.

When our own turn came [to exercise patience], how we got so astonished?

Like ugly individuals, we became sheets that hide.

O heart! You made everyone active in duty

Make yourself active now and be ashamed of acting like that.

O the tongue! You were the one who advised everyone [to patiently persevere]

Why did you fell silent when it was your turn [to advise ourselves]?

O intellect! What happened to your sweet advice?

Now it's your turn, what happened to you [and to your planning]?

O intellect! You used to remove boundless distresses from the heart

Your turn has come, remove the distress [we are now in].

When you were the cure for others in their pain

When pain came to you as a guest, you fell silent.

It was your way to challenge the army

Who has now grabbed hold of your challenge and voice?

What you weaved for fifty years with intelligence

Wear just one of the clothes from that weaving.

You were always the head, do not make yourself a tail now

Do not lose your feet, hand, moustache, and beard.

The move on the chessboard is your prerogative

Bring yourself now to good temperament and exhilaration [to win your next move].

After Completing the Argumentations and Stating the State of their Hearts, the Three Princes Embarked on an Epic Journey to their Beloved and Objective, the Dominion of China in order to get Closer to their Objective as much as Possible Even though the Path of Meeting the Beloved was Closed as Getting Close to the Objective as much as Possible is Still Good

When the three princes came across the situation of being incapacitated with love

The love humiliated them abundantly.

They said this and proceeded immediately

O my friend! Whatever had to happen, happened already.

They adopted patience and got included among the truthful ones, the intimates of God

Then proceeded towards the cities of China.

They left their parents and their country

Adopted the path leading to the concealed beloved.

Like Ibrahim Adham, from the throne [they were going to inherit]

Love made them helpless and impoverished[35].

Or like Abraham, the great prophet

He put himself in fire.

Or like sanctified and patient Ishmael

He put his head on the ground in front of the intense love and its sharp knife.

After Staying and Hiding in the City of Cities of China, its Capital and Running out of Patience, the Oldest Brother becoming Impatient and Wanting to Surrender himself to the King of China and Getting no Benefit out of the Advice His Two Brothers Gave him to not do so

Either my step will grant me my objective

Or I will put my head down there like my heart [to lay down my life as a sacrifice for the unattained love].

Either my feet will propel me to my objective

Or like the heart, I will put my head down with my own hand.

O you who condemns the group of lovers! Leave this group alone

The one who has been misguided by God, how would you guide?

The oldest one said: O my brothers!

My soul has come to my lips due to the wait.

I don't care anymore, there is no patience left in me

This patience has made me sit in fire.

Exercising patience is now beyond my power

My story has become a lesson to be learned by the lovers.

[35] Ibrahim bin Adham was a great saint, Gnostic and intimate of God who used to be a medieval king in Central Asia. He left his kingdom behind to search for the eternal truths, the meaning and purpose of life, and intimacy and proximity with the Divine. His self-sacrifice was Divinely accepted, he achieved his purpose for which he set forth and became one of the greatest Gnostics and intimates of God.

I am fed up with life due to separation [from the beloved]

Being alive in the state of separation is hypocrisy.

How much this pain of separation will kill me?

Remove my head so that the love will bestow on me a new head[36].

My faith is alive because of my love

To live with this life and head is an affront to me[37].

When the dust of the body is removed, my moon shone

The moon of my soul drank pure water[38].

My soul has claimed to be a drake

When does it plead against the storms and hurricanes?

Why would a duck be afraid of ship break and sink?

Its ship on water is its feet [to swim on to safety].

This claim has kept my soul and body alive

How can I stay quiet about this claim?

The other two brothers tried to advise the oldest brother

To not keep himself unaware of the dangers of doing that.

To not put salt on their injuries [as they were also stricken with love and then they were going to endure separation from the oldest brother]

To not eat this poison due to haste and doubt.

Without the wisdom of an aware spiritual guide

When you do not have a seeing heart, why do you tread the path?

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[36] After annihilation in God (*Fana*), there comes the state of subsistence in God (*Baqa*), in other words, when the desires of the lower self are eradicated in the love and will of the Beloved (God), there comes a new life that is a never-ending, eternal life. Through this story, Rumi is elucidating the spiritual path, its pitfalls and secrets of success in it.

[37] I want to attain a life of [deep spiritual] meaning, outer life [in the material realm] is difficult for me to deal with.

[38] After soul is liberated from the bodily constraints, the soul becomes illumined and enlightened.

Intellect is like wings for individuals [that help them ascend to spiritual heights]

If you do not possess intellect, use the intellect of the spiritual guide.

[The two younger brothers admonished the oldest brother] Beware! See this with trepidation

Don't make such a claim or do such a thing.

You will make our lives miserable for us

O brother! Who is persuading you to do that?

One who is not familiar with the path, may travel incessantly for hundred years

It will count for nothing!

Do not go to the battlefield without weapons

Do not put yourself in destruction like those who don't care.

They said all this but that impatient oldest brother said:

I feel a revulsion to these things [that you just said].

My chest is filled with fire like a fireplace

The crop is ready, it's time to harvest.

I had patience in my chest but it is no longer there

Intense love has replaced patience with fire.

The night this intense love was born, my patience died

It died but may you be blessed with life.

O you who is talking about the dangers

I have risen above that, do not hammer cold iron [as it won't do any good].

I have turned upside down, beware, let go of my feet

Where has the understanding remained in parts of my body?

I will put my flag in the ground

Either I will lose my head or will find the countenance of the beloved.

The eye that is not refreshed with the meeting with the beloved

Such an eye is better off being blind.

Brothers Advising the Oldest Brother Again and Him not being Able to Endure it and as a Mad Lover and Insane Going to the King's Court and Seeking Permission due to Intensity of Love and not due to any Misbehavior

The two brothers told him: In our hearts

Are answers [to your travails] just like the stars in the sky.

If we had not said that then it would have been unfair to you

If we say that, your heart aches.

He stood up and said: O my own! Farewell

This world and everything in it are temporary.

He got out like an arrow from a bow

As there was nothing left to talk.

He uncontrollably came in front of the Chinese king

He impetuously kissed the ground in front of the king.

Every state of his being was manifestly evident to the king

The beginning of the sorrow and the end and his hesitation.

Sheep is busy in its grazing land

But shepherd is aware of its state.

Due to "Every one of you is a shepherd" he knew who in the herd

Is a grazer of grass and who is in fighting [with other animals in the herd][39].

[39] The state of the oldest brother and the king resembled to that of a sheep and its shepherd who is busy in its work but shepherd is keeping a close watch over it and is not neglectful of it to the slightest. Prophet Muhammad (Peace

He (the king) was aware of this group's pain and travails

But due to prudence, he kept quiet and did not reveal the secret he knew.

That esteemed one was in between their souls

But intentionally made himself dumb.

The form of the fire is under the pot

The inner reality of fire is in the pot.

Its form is outside, but its inner reality is inside

The inner reality of the lover - the soul, is in the veins like blood[40].

The prince respectfully sat in front of the king

The introducer was about to introduce the prince to the king.

Even though the king knew everything from before

But allowed the introducer to still introduce.

A particle of illumination of Gnosis in the inner being

O respected one! Is better than hundred introducers[41].

To lend ear to the introducer

Is an indication of being veiled and in a state of guessing.

One who has the seeing eye of the heart

Such an eye will do a close inspection[42].

Such a one will not be contended with conveyed news

Instead, the certitude one has comes from the eye of the heart.

Then introducer mentioned to the king

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and blessings of God be upon him) said: "Every one of you is a shepherd and will be questioned and held accountable for on the Day of Judgment about their herd (subjects and those one is responsible for their well-being and care)". A shepherd is aware of who in the herd is grazing and who is fighting.

[40] Soul is like the beloved. It's separate from the body but its influence is in the veins like blood circulation in the veins.

[41] If even a particle of Gnosis is in the heart, the spiritual unveiling (*Kashf*) it brings about is far superior to the information provided by an introducer or informer.

[42] One whose eye of the heart gets opened up starts to perceive reality and gets to the bottom of matters.

The state of the prince.

He said: Your majesty! He is in need of your favors

Please grant him a royal treatment befitting of your honor as he has pinned all his hopes in you.

He has associated himself with you

Please put your hand of kindness on his head in his state of distress.

The king said: Whatever position and land

He has requested, he will get it from me.

The country he has left behind, I will grant him twenty times of that

I will grant him that and my kindness towards him is on top of that.

The introducer said: Ever since your magnificence has planted the seed of intense love in him

Except for desiring you, what other desire is left in him?[43]

Slavery to you has been so suitable to him

That the desire for dominion is wiped off from his heart.

He lost the royalty and the princely life

For your sake, he has made peace with travelling.

The Sufi who has thrown away the rag in spiritual ecstasy

Whence does he pay attention to another rag?[44]

It is very remote from a lover to even think of that

If one thinks like that, dust should be put on that head.

The dominion of the earth is permissible for the worshippers of the body

[43] The prince has adopted poverty after leaving opulence, power, dominion and everything else behind, nothing else has remained in his heart other than his desire for you. This is a parable of a slave's love for God who sincerely associates one's lot with Him alone without caring for any material benefit or loss.

[44] The prince left behind his kingdom which has been compared here to "Sufi" rag. Once it is thrown away, he would never accept it back. To throw away one rag and regret doing it later and accept another one from someone else and being avid for it, would be tantamount to considering losing the rag for spiritual ecstasy as a loss. This spiritual ecstasy (*Wajd*) is priceless and nothing is worth that.

We are the slaves of the limitless dominion of love.[45]

He is a position holder of love, please do not depose him

Do not get him busy with anything, other than your love.

The prince is saying with the tongue of his inner state: The position that stops me from your vision

Is practically a deposition and is a position in name only.

The reason for his delay in coming to you

Was the lack of [spiritual] capability and weakness of the body.

If you go to the mine without preparation

You will not be able to apprehend even a single particle.

Such a one will be like a lamp without oil and wick

Its light will neither be small or big.

It's like a bird from the land that is in the sea

What will it find other than loss and destruction?[46]

It's like the one who has arrived at a grind mill without wheat to grind

He will not have any reward other than getting beard and hair dusty and gray.

Those who are without wheat, the grind mill of the heaven

Impart them the grayness of hair and weakness of the back.

But for those who possess wheat, this grind mill

Becomes an imparter of dominion, [Divine] work and royalty[47].

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[45] The lovers want to have the boundless dominion of the Divine love.

[46] The introducer is informing the king about the prince that his delay in coming to your presence was not due to lack of the intensity of love. Rather he was busy in increasing his spiritual capacity and furthermore he was weak. In that state, he was neither able to derive spiritual benefits (*Fayd*) nor was he able to perform services that require physical rigors and strength. Unless and until there is spiritual capacity to achieve one's purpose [of life], the efforts are useless. Hence a spiritual traveler needs spiritual capacity and strength to forge ahead into the spiritual path and ultimately being in the Divine Presence. This is again a parable for what is needed to be in the Divine presence in a state of Gnosis or intimacy with the Divine.

[47] If a spiritual traveler or beginner on the spiritual path without the spiritual capacity, goes to a spiritual guide, such

There is no end to this, don't search for it

Go and get the capacity [to forge ahead].

He waited for attaining the capacity before coming to you

The intensity of his desire [for your vision] crossed all limits but capacity was not attained.

He said that the capacity is also attained through the king

Without soul, when does the body become capable?[48]

The kindness of the king, folded up his sorrows

He came to hunt the king but got himself hunted down.

He got trapped in your trap and got hunted down

By not capturing the prey, he himself got preyed.

A person desirous of wealth, certainly

Get incarcerated by it first[49].

Think of the mark on face of the world as opposite of what it seems to be

The name of every slave of the world is called the lord of the world.

O the body with low understanding and opposite ways!

You have imprisoned millions of free souls[50].

Leave all the excuses [to earn wealth and fame] for a short while

Before death, live a free life for a few hours.

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a one is like the one who goes to a grind mill that is running without any wheat to grind. Such a one will return with getting all hair looking gray with dust. People without spiritual capacity, with the passage of time, get nothing other than getting old, grayed out and weak. The grind mill of the heaven only benefits those who have the wheat of right belief and righteous actions.

[48] The introducer said: He has remained away from you until now because he was trying to increase his capacity. Even though it has not bot been attained yet, he has become compelled and helpless due to the intensity of love for you. He has now thought that the attainment of capacity will also happen through the king. Attainment of full capacity happens after soul comes into the body which is what you (i.e., the king) will impart. Obviously, one who wants to prey you, will himself get preyed.

[49] It's the rule of beloved thing that human beings instead of obtaining it, hand themselves over to the beloved thing first. Think of worldly things as the opposite of what they seem to be. One who is a prisoner of the world is called the rich of the world.

[50] The body has imprisoned millions of free souls.

O busy body! Leave me alone

You have ruined my life, go and find someone else[51].

The Chinese King Bestowing Honors on the Foreign Prince

The upshot is that the king used to bestow bounties upon him

Through that sun, he used to melt like the moon.

The melting of the lovers only increases

In freshness just like a moon in phases of reduction.

All the sick hope for medicines

This sick [with Divine love] prays for increase in this illness.

All patients search for medicines for recovery and this one

Seeks more sorrow, pain, and weeping [out of intense love for the Divine].

I have not seen a poison better than this drink

No health would be better than this illness.

He remained in front of the king like that

Heart was burnt down, and soul was on the platter [to be presented to the king].

He said the king has cut off the head of anyone who expressed desire for his daughter

But I am getting sacrificed every moment because of the king.

In the field of love, one cannot run with two feet alone

On the chessboard of love, the move cannot be made with just one head.

Everyone has two feet and a head

[51] Rumi is saying this and accurately predicting and foretelling his own demise. The time for my freedom (demise from this world) has arrived. Liberate me and find someone else to imprison.

A body with thousands of feet and heads is burnt down.

Since the purpose of this love is boundless

In front of the intensity of the heat of this love, the heat of hell is insignificant[52].

Narration of the Statement of Hell, Over which there is Thin and Sharp Bridge on which Everyone will Walk to Reach their Final Destination in the Eternal Abode, to the Believer to Hurry up and Pass over it Quickly so that the Immensity of the Believer's Illumination may not Extinguish it and its Statement, "O Believer! Pass over me! Verily, your Light has Extinguished my Fire"

O respected one! That's why the illumination of the believer

Causes hell to become weak and extinguished.

It says: O honorable one! Pass over me quickly

Otherwise, your fire [of Divine love] will extinguish my fire.

Disbelief [manifested in sordid actions in worldly life] is only the gun powder of hell

See how it is extinguished by the inner light of the believer [manifested in noble actions in the worldly sojourn].

Quickly hand over your gun powder [to a spiritual guide or perfected one]

So, the hell will not stomp you nor any of its sparks[53].

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[52] The prince said: I have already sacrificed my wealth and head to obtain this love. After annihilation and extinction of one's ego and desires from the lower self (*Fana*), one attains subsistence through the Being of God (*Baqa*). Ordinary people are deprived of this love because they only have two feet and a head as they are not sufficient to attain the Divine love. The love of a human being (i.e., love of a man for a woman and vice versa) creates an uproar that ends when the two feet and a head are gone (i.e., when one's life comes to an end). However, the uproar of the real love (i.e., Divine love) only increases in intensity day by day. Since this love's final conclusion and destination is limitless, unbounded by time and place, and eternal, hence the heat of this real love is of unfathomable intensity, dwarfing even the heat of the Hell that is known for its unbearable intensity.

[53] Remove from within your inner being this gun powder (negative, evil, vile propensities and inclinations that translate into sordid deeds) that attracts the fury of hell when you pass over it on the Day of Judgment. Hand this gun power material from deep within your self to a perfected human being, a spiritual guide, Gnostic or possessor of Divine love so that nothing is left within your soul that attracts the fire and fury of Hell. Human being carries within oneself the seeds of one's own damnation and salvation. Damnation in the form of eternal sorrow and suffering, and salvation in the form of eternal happiness and endless triumph.

Such a one is asked by the heaven: Pass over me like a breeze

Otherwise, what I possess will become counterfeit.

Because you are the possessor of farmland, while I am only the picker of its grains

I am only an idol while you are the dominions of China[54].

With you O believer! The hell is in trepidation and so is the heaven

No one is at peace with you, neither this nor that.

From Among the Three Princes, the Oldest one Died and the Second Brother Adopted the Company of the King

His life ended as he did not find time to get cured

Patience was too debilitating, and his soul was not able to bear it[55].

For a long time, he bore it with fear

The life came to an end without achieving his purpose and objective[56].

The face of the beloved disappeared from him

He died and became a companion of the inner reality of the beloved[57].

He said: Even though the dress of the beloved is made up of silk

It's better to embrace the Divine Beauty without any veils and separations.

I have become deprived of the body and the body became devoid of the thought of the [earthly] beloved

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[54] The loftiness and status of a believer and a sincere Divine lover is higher than even the heaven, and the heart of such a one is a place of manifestation of the Divine Being. Heaven does not have this quality, that's why, one that is less in status feels shy with the one higher in status. In short, a believer is loftier than the Heaven and the Hell in one's spiritual status.

[55] The oldest brother and prince did not find a way to meet with his beloved, and his life ended in that state and he could not bear the separation nor he retained the patience to persistently persevere in striving for his objective.

[56] For a long time, he was afraid to express his love, and in the end, departed from this world without meeting the beloved.

[57] The beloved who was the manifestation of the Divine love disappeared from his sight upon his death, and he was unified with the Divine Beauty that was evident in that manifestation. Thus, he was no longer in need of seeing the Divine Beauty and Divine Reality in a creation as he embraced the Reality without any veil or separation.

I am now walking steadily and smoothly in the way of real meeting with the [Real] Beloved.

These debates are to be stated only until this point

What comes after it is to be kept secret[58]*.*

The race of the horse and the reins are until the river

After that, your ride is a ride made of wood.

The wooden ride (boat) is useless in land

But it's a guide particularly for those of the river.

This silence is the wooden ride

For the people of the ocean [of Divine love], silence has been insisted[59]*.*

The silence that makes you riled

Raises the slogans of [Divine] love.

I have become deaf due to the noise of that slogan [in the state of silence] while others are oblivious to it

People with sharp hearing [for worldly matters] are deaf towards this story.

One person is raising loud slogans in dreams

Doing tens of thousands of talks and debates.

Another one is sitting right next to the first one, totally oblivious to it

Such a one is asleep to that and is deaf from the sounds and screams the first one is hearing[60]*.*

[58] Only this much can be expressed in words in a discussion and anything beyond this point is the meeting with the real Beloved (God, the Exalted), and it's only experiential and cannot be described through words.

[59] People of the speech (laymen) cannot be explained the inner spiritual state that can only be understood by the people of the inner spiritual state just like a boat that is useless on land. Silence is the talk for the people of the inner spiritual state and it is sloganeering of [Divine] love for them as they have the ears to listen to the talk of this inner state.

[60] People indulged in worldliness are oblivious and deaf to the sounds of the Divine love experienced by the one with the inner spiritual state. The parable of this is like of a person who hears so much in one's dream but the person sitting next is totally unaware of that.

One whose wooden ride (boat) has capsized [in the middle of ocean]

Has sunk in water and oneself has become a fish[61].

Upshot is that the [oldest] prince left the world

His soul was pained, sorrowful and warm when he departed[62].

The Second Brother Coming to the Funeral of the Oldest Brother as the Youngest Brother was Bedridden due to Illness and King Bestowing Generously on the Second Brother and He Attaining Hundreds of Thousands of Inner and Outer Wealth through the Sight of the King

The youngest one was sick and the middle one

Just came to the funeral of the oldest brother.

The king saw him and on purpose asked: Who that is?

Because he belonged to the same sea and he is also a fish.

The introducer said: He is the son of the same father

This brother is younger than the one who died.

The king generously bestowed upon him [his largesse] and said: You are unique

He preyed upon him with his largesse.

Because of the endowment of that unique king

He saw in him a life besides the other life.

He saw in his heart magnificent sound and excitement

Which is something a Sufi would not even find in hundred spiritual strivings[63].

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[61] Up until now the discussion has been about the person with true inner spiritual experience (*Dhawq* or *Zauq*). One who has been annihilated in the Divine Being (*Fana*) and is deeply immersed in it, finds the inner experience to be annihilation as well. Such a one is like a fish that swims in the depths and breadths of this fathomless ocean and is in no need of a boat.

[62] The summary of the state of the oldest brother is that he departed from this world with the pain and sorrow of [unattained] love.

[63] Because of the spiritual attention of the king on the heart of the second brother, his inner state changed dramatically and he felt a new life in his heart. He saw in his heart such an excitement and vigor for Divine love

He found in his heart a magnificent world [of Gnosis and Divine intimacy]

That cannot be achieved even after hundred solitudes [for spiritual strivings].

The fields, walls, mountains, and rocks shone with brilliance

In front of him, they were like ripe pomegranate split open.

In front of him, every particle was like sun

Every moment in hundred ways, it used to provide spiritual openings.

The door sometimes became like an opening and sometimes like a ray

Dust sometimes became wheat, sometimes a big measure of nourishment.

Heaven (sky) in front of his eyes was like old dried-up meat

In front of his eyes, there was a new creation all the time[64].

When the beautiful soul gets liberated from the [prison of the] body

Verily with the destiny of God, it is endowed with an eye.

Hundreds of thousands of things from the unseen realm, manifested before him

Whatever the eye of those privy to secrets can see, he saw.

Whatever he read in books

He opened his eyes on their inner reality.

From the dust of the procession of that great king

He found a vision-clarifying and vision-enhancing kohl.

He used to drag his clothes in such a garden

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that a *Sufi* (a striver in the spiritual path) would not find even in hundred spiritual rigors and strivings (primarily doing intense Divine remembrance and contemplation in seclusion over a prolonged period of time)

[64] Due to the profusion of Divine illuminations, the whole world became illumined and spiritual meaning started to reveal themselves and everything started to appear as a manifestation of Divine qualities and perfections. Now every particle of world became a source of spiritual revelations (*Kashf*), and doors or knowledge and inner spiritual meaning started to open up for him. That door of knowledge sometimes became a source of knowledge and sometime knowledge itself. Now the material physical realm (*'Alam al-Nasoot*) seemed to him as valueless as in front of him was the realm of the angels (*'Alam al-Malakoot*).

Where every fiber of his being used to cry "Is there more?"

A garden grown out of flowers comes to an end

A garden that grows out of the heart lasts forever[65].

We are so dominated by one or two bouquets

Because we have closed the door to the garden upon us[66].

Such keys, all the time, in exchange for bread

Alas O my soul! Are falling off from the fingers.

If you become unworried about bread for some time

You get obsessed with clothes, carnal love, and women.

When lust rises within you

You want the whole country and city full of women and bread[67].

You used to be a snake, perhaps now you have become a dragon

You were a one-head snake, now you are seven-headed.

The seven-headed dragon is hell

Your greed is like grain and hell is like the net setup as a trap for you.

Tear up the net and burn the grain

Open up the new doors of this house[68].

O shameless pauper! Since you are not a lover

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[65] The spiritual revelations of the second prince are not to be surprised about or amazed at. When the [intrinsically] beautiful soul is liberated from the incarceration of the body, whether it is liberated due to enduring spiritual struggles (*Mujahada*) by subduing the base lower self (*Nafs*) or by means of keeping the company of a perfected spiritual guide (*Shaykh al-Kamil*), it attains all kinds of spiritual revelations. The prince attained this lofty inner state by means of the company of the king who is a parable for a perfected spiritual guide, fully capable of bringing about a massive inner spiritual transformation in the core of one's being. The prince was strolling in the gardens of every inner knowledge and asking for more, like other achievers in the spiritual path. The material knowledges are just a few bouquets from the garden of Gnosis (*Ma'rifa*).

[66] We have become enamored with material knowledge due to becoming oblivious to the knowledge of the realities and spiritual realm.

[67] When stomach becomes full, you become enamored of the lust of the private parts. Then the human greed increases more and one runs after whole countries and cities full of wealth and means to fulfil their ever-increasing lust and greed that knows no bounds.

[68] Move yourself away from the greed and lust that are like grain and net for entrapment, only then the deep inner spiritual meanings and doors to Divine knowledge will open up for you.

You possess an unknown sound like a mountain[69]*.*

If you reform yourself while

Divine retribution is concealed before you

You become the owner and judge in both the worlds (this and the next).

An eternal kingdom will appear before you

It's not a two day long, borrowed, and replete with illnesses of life.

You will get freed up from forced labor and will do your own work

You will become your own king and will blow you own trumpet[70]*.*

When throat is making life constricted upon us

Alas! The throat and mouth eat dust.

This mouth is an eater of dust

But that dust that has become colorful.

This kabab, wine, and sugar

O child! Is nothing but colorful and decorated dust.

When you finished eating and it became your flesh and blood

It received the color of flesh and that is also a dust of alley.

The coloring on earth is done with dust

Then everything [again] becomes dust[71]*.*

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[69] If you do not have Divine love that comes with such Divine knowledge then you are like a mountain that deflects the sound and is unaware of it. In other words, your material knowledges in this state are like sounds deflected from a mountain.

[70] When Divine punishment comes before you with all its fury, it's too late to repent and make amends. If one reforms and corrects oneself when Divine retribution was in hiding and one has not seen it, then one is like a king and no one can bother such a one. When faith on the unseen exists like this then one receives a permanent kingdom and you will cease to have a life of slavery, instead you will attain freedom. These tastes and pleasures of the mouth and throat are lethal for us. At the time of Divine retribution, one would regret them and would wish to have eaten dust instead. Whatever one is eating in this world including delicious things, is nothing but dust that has been covered with colors and all the delicacies of the world are colored and decorated dust.

[71] First this dust had the color of food and fruits, then it was consumed and became part of the body in the form of flesh and blood, then again in the end that flesh and blood will become dust of the earth. Body that itself is dust is nourished with dust and in the end becomes dust again when one reaches the grave.

Indians, Qibchaqi Turks, Romans and Ethiopians
Become the same color inside their graves.
So that you would understand that all colors and marks are
Veils, deceptions and borrowed things.
Because the only color that lasts is the color of God and nothing else
Think of everything else as tied up like a bell [to an animal in cattle][72].
The color of truth, fear of God and Divine certitude
Will stay forever on the servants and worshippers of God.
The color of doubt, disbelief, and hypocrisy
Will stay forever on the disobedient soul.
Like the cunning Pharaoh and his dark evil deeds
Their color has remained, but the body is gone.
The magnificence and shine on the beautiful faces of the truthful ones
Will endure till the Day of Judgment even though their bodies are gone.
God gives dust color, skills, and humor and
Because of them, those engage in war who have childish temperament.
Camels and lions [shaped breads] made of flour are baked
Children lick them with greed.
Lions and camels become bread in the mouth
This does not have any effect on children.
Like children, we have filled ourselves with dust

[72] Human beings no matter where they are from and no matter what skin colors they have during their ephemeral earthly life, become the same dust of the same color after they die. The purpose of the same ending for everyone is to drive home the message that the differences of colors, races, cultures and countries are all temporary. In reality the origin and the final end of the human being is the same. The only thing that stays forever is the color of God that one achieves through righteous deeds in this ephemeral earthly existence. "Qipchaq" is a Eurasian desert inhabited by some nomadic Turkish people. A bell tied to a domesticated animal or cattle is not owned by it, but rather it's a borrowed thing.

The attempt to adopt real means and wherewithal [for achieving our purpose of life] has gone out of our heads.

A child is engrossed in foolishness, conjecture, and doubt

Thanks God, a child has little physical strength[73].

Regrets are for those children who are enduring old age and senior years

They are limping ants who are ruling [the world].

A child has hundred fights and quarrels

Thanks God, a child is without strategies and without weapons [and hence unable to inflict any real harm to anyone].

Regrets are for those uncouth, ill-mannered children who are grown up old adults and

Have become a source of misery for everyone keeping a watch over them due to the power and control they possess [to inflict real harm and sow conflicts debilitating the world][74].

When ignorance and weapons combine

It becomes a world-destroying Pharaoh due to tyranny and oppression.

O poor man! Be thankful to God for this deficiency [of lacking wealth]

That it saved you from oppression and disbelief.

Be thankful that you are oppressed and not an oppressor

You are protected from [committing] tyranny and from every source of evil.

An empty stomach has not claimed Godhood

[73] If one tries to explain to little children that camels and lions made up of flour are not real camels and lions, they will not accept it. We have also filled ourselves with dust like children and have become oblivious to what we should be doing in terms of achieving the real purpose of our lives.

[74] The ignorance and foolishness of a child is not harmful as a child does not have much strength and power and if that leads to a fight then it's a small fight where no real harm is done. Regrettable are the grown-up older people who act like children. In reality, they are limping ants who possess [socio-political] power and wealth, and their ignorance causes massive harm and destruction around us and in the world.

Because this fire within oneself is not aided by fuel [thus increasing its intensity].

An empty stomach is a prison for Satan

Because for it, the worry of finding bread prevents it from cunningness and deceit.

If a fruit is old, until it is raw

It is called unripe [no matter how long it stays on the tree].

Even if that raw [person] becomes hundred years' old

For every understanding person it is a child and raw.

Even if the hair and beard become gray

One is still in the same childhood, fear, and hope[75].

Everything in the realm above this material realm is spiritual

It is the summary of the summary and is Godly.

[Outer] Form is a shadow and inner meaning is [like the light giving] sun

A light without shadow is only found in a deserted place.

Because there, there is no brick upon brick

For moon, no bad shadow was left.

Brick even though it's made of gold, deserves to be removed

[75] The old age of the worldly materialistic people, does not take them out of their childhood (immaturity and ignorance). If one does not become intelligent [in terms of maturity, prudence, wisdom and striving for the real purpose of life] even in old age, one is still a child due to the childish behavior even though the hair is grayed out due to old age. Fear and hope belong to two types of people: first, it's the spiritually perfected ones which is the purpose of the Divine law. The reality of this is that one adheres to the Divine law and diligently observes its commands and prohibitions, then think of one's good deeds as small enough to deserve Divine acceptance, and be fearful of it. At the same time, one keeps an eye on Divine mercy and remains a candidate of Divine acceptance. Its parable is like that of a farmer who cultivates the land, puts seeds and waits for rain by Divine mercy. The second person of hope and fear is childish, in which one does not do any work (righteous deeds) and then hopes for Divine mercy in the form of cultivation for harvesting. This in reality is arrogance and deception. Another parable of second type of childish fear and hope is that one due to fear of God's majesty, thinks of one's deeds as too small and stops doing the work and says that God is merciful and grants favors even on the one who does not work. This is not fear, rather it's cowardice. This is the fear and hope that is adopted by people who do not work for good results, and it is merely a childish behavior.

When in place of brick, there is [spiritual] revelation and illumination[76].

Mount [Sinai] split asunder into pieces in order to remove the shadow

To split asunder into pieces for the sake of this Divine light is a small thing.

When the light of God fell upon the outer part of the Mount [Sinai]

It split asunder so that the light of God could also reach inside it.

When one afflicted with hunger, gets hold of bread

Due to greed, opens the mouth and eyes wide[77].

It is suitable for it (Mount Sinai) to split asunder into hundreds of thousands of pieces

O earth! Move away from in between the heaven.

So that the heavenly illumination burns down the shadow

O the enemy of the day! Night is there because of your shadow.

This earth is for raising children

It has a constricted place for the adults.

God has decreed that earth will raise up children

In it, He has flown milk for the sake of children[78].

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[76] The summary of all actions is the struggle in the spiritual path (*Tariqa*). When God pulls one towards Himself (*Jadhb* or *Jazb*), one attains annihilation in God (*Fana*) then afterwards, one attains subsistence in God (*Baqa*). The outer form or actions of the body are like shadows and spiritual meanings of those actions are illuminating like sun. One attains illumination without shadow when one attains annihilation in God (*Fana*), i.e., getting rid of desires and qualities of the lower base self (*Nafs*). When the shadow of bricks of human propensities, weaknesses and lower self are removed, spiritual illuminations are no longer blocked by the shadow. When removing bricks leads to unabated illuminations, it is worth removing these bricks.

[77] When one afflicted with hunger, gets a loaf of bread, opens the mouth big and eats hurriedly in big morsels. Same thing happened with Mount Sinai in Egypt when Prophet Moses (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) went there to converse with God and asked God to show a Divine glimpse, God replied "You will not be able to see Me". Then God showed just one light from his Divine lights on the Mount Sinai, it split asunder into pieces and Moses fell unconscious.

[78] Human body is like planet earth which is a cause of shadow and becomes an impediment for the light of sun and hence night sets in. Body and the material realm are a cradle for the people of worldliness (materialism) who are like children and the cradle is too small for grown up adults. Hence, spiritually perfected individuals find constriction and narrowness in their worldly lives. For these children (who have not grown spiritually and are obsessed with material and bodily existence), earth provides material benefits which is referred to here as "milk".

Due to the excessive number of cradles, the house has become constricted

O God! Please make these children adults quickly.

Beware O cradle! Do not make the place narrow and constricted

So that grown up adults can walk about freely.

Do not make the house for raising children constricted

So that the adults can find expansiveness.

The Insinuative Thought in Second Prince Caused by His Sense of being Self-Sufficient and Spiritual Unveilings He had been Receiving in His Heart Because of the King, as a Result of this Insinuation, He was Planning to Rebel against the King and being Ungrateful to him, the King Finding Out about it by Way of Revelation of the Heart and it Pained His Heart and Injured His Soul in such a Way that Prince was not even Aware of it

When without buying and selling, became permanent

The wages for the Prince's soul from the inner being of the King.

He used to derive spiritual nourishment from illumination from the King's soul for

The moon of his soul, like moon getting its light from the sun.

From the unexemplified king, the spiritual wages

Used to reach his soul at all times.

Not what ordinary people eat

Rather the nourishment that angels eat.

Prince [mistakenly] saw within himself independence and self-sufficiency [from the king]

This independence engendered rebellion [from the king].

That: Am I not the king and the prince [in my own right]?

Why have I given the reins [of my life] to this king?[79]

[79] The second prince used to derive spiritual benefits and blessings from the king (perfected spiritual guide) like moon deriving its light from the sun. His soul received a measured amount of spiritual sustenance from the king

When my bright moon has appeared on the horizon

Why should I then become subservient to the dust?

There is water in my stream and it's time to be proud [of who I am]

I am independent now, why should I tolerate someone else's pride?

Why should I put a band around my head when headache has not remained?

The time for wet eyes and pale face has not remained.

When I now have sweet lips and cheeks like moon

I should open another shop [of my own][80].

When his lower self, started to inflate with egoism

He started to utter a lot of useless utterances[81].

The ocean of the king, which is the meeting point of all waters (rivers and streams)

Why would it not know what is in the flow and in the stream?

His thought caused hurt in the heart of the king

Due to ungratefulness for his spiritual bestowal and endowment.

The king [said to himself]: O vile and ill-mannered!

Surprisingly, this is the punishment for my largesse!

For what I did for you from this good treasure?

---

every day. It was not the nourishment that ordinary people receive, rather it was a spiritual nourishment that angels receive. Due to the spiritual benefits and blessings he had been receiving from the king, prince started to believe and think that he has attained spiritual perfection and is no longer in need of serving and obeying the king. The result of this wrong thought and insinuation [from Satan and the lower self] was that all his spiritual benefits he had been receiving through the king were snatched away from him. The rebellion that was instigated in him was due to the insinuation that he is the king and prince, i.e., he has attained spiritual perfection and is no longer in need of the king and should not be handing over his reins to the king.

[80] When I have become perfected, why should I listen to someone else. When I no longer have inner diseases of the soul, why should I keep company of a spiritual guide? I should now become a spiritual guide myself.

[81] When self-righteousness and egoism was born in him at this stage of his spiritual state, he started to utter a lot of wrong things that were detrimental to his spiritual state to the point of causing regression and decline. After attaining inner spiritual transformation and reformation, there is still a danger of regression due to such egoistic thoughts that are entertained.

And what you did in return with me due to your evil habits?

I became your ladder to the heaven

You became bow and arrow to fight with me!

The pain of incense appeared in the king

The reflection of king's pain got into his inner being.

The bird of wealth convulsed due to his wrath

It shattered the veils of the one planning the sidelining[82].

When that young man saw his inner being

He saw the effect of his dark deeds.

That wage of kindness and blessing got lost

His abode of happiness got filled with sorrow.

Whoever looked to oneself in the path of the Beloved

Left the kernel and only saw the outer shell.

May God not even make my enemy look within oneself

Because nothing is expected from such a one except turmoil and destruction[83].

Alcohol has been forbidden in the world

Because you immediately become someone who looks within yourself.

In your imagination, no one better comes to you except yourself

All this gets born within you due to the lower self[84].

O you! Separate yourself from your lower self (Nafs)

---

[82] The king was hurt because prince was being rebellious even after the king bestowed his largesse upon him. The "bird of wealth", i.e., prince's inner spiritual state of the heart was shattered due to his plan to sideline the king.
[83] Rumi says that the one who is arrogant in the path of spiritual perfection and Gnosis, becomes devoid of the reality of the spiritual path. This is such a loss and destruction that I do not even wish my enemy to have.
[84] Alcohol has been forbidden because Qur'an says: "Satan wants to sow anarchy and discord among you with alcohol and gambling", the cause of enmity is usually egoism, self-righteousness and looking within oneself and deeming oneself better than anyone else. Alcohol contributes to that harmful inner state. That's what happened to the prince.

Till when you will remain imprisoned by it.

O beloved! Hand over your soul to the Beloved

So that you could see the Friend who keeps your heart perturbed.

Hand over your soul to the Beloved and get liberated

Do the right thing for it and attain happiness[85].

Do not let the lower self dominate you

Wean it off from its milk.

Everything has an intoxicating effect

Whether it is milk, wine, or honey.

O human being! Know the intoxication of the wheat

That made Adam unaware [after he was made Divinely aware][86].

The prince got separated from the heaven like Adam

Who used to plough the fields for farming with a bull.

He used to shed tears [on the harm done to his inner state] and say: O mighty robber!

You have transformed a lion into a prisoner of the bull's tail.

O evil and cold self! You did

Ill mannerism with the kind king.

In your greed for wheat, you have chosen the net [that traps]

For you, every grain of wheat used as a bait has become a scorpion.

The air of egoism filled your head

---

[85] Hand over everything you have to the Beloved (God) then you will have the vision [with the eye of the soul]. Don't get subdued by the lower self and deprive it of its lusts.

[86] The intoxication of looking to oneself in admiration, harms one. Whatever thing causes it, whether it is permissible or forbidden, should be avoided. Everything can have an intoxicating effect that needs to be assessed in light of one's spiritual journey. See how eating wheat [that was forbidden by God when Adam was in heaven], made Adam unaware after he was made aware and was deceived by it to the extent that he lost his abode in the Heaven where he had all types of comforts and got pushed down to earth where he went through tremendous hardships and struggles.

Now see the fifty-ton chain in your feet.

The prince was weeping over himself like that

Why did I become an opponent of the king?

He regained consciousness [from ignorance and arrogance] and repented

The pain of separation from the Beloved

Have mercy! Is incurable.

O God! May the condition of human beings not improve

When the state of patience ends, one discovers the ego and prominence.

Let human being not have the potency to inflict harm!

Because at that time, one would not care about the faith [to restrain oneself] or the path of self-reformation [that one may be treading].

A human being beset with troubles is better

Because the lower self is a rejecter of [Divine] blessings and is misguided [from the correct path in life as it is inclined towards harm and evil].

A human being in trial and tribulation is better

Because such a one is humiliated, humbled and helpless [thus being oppressed, one does not become an oppressor oneself].

Returning to the Story of the Prince who Inflicted Great Loss and Harm to Himself due to His Rebellion and He Getting Injured from the Heart of the King and Leaving the World without Completing the Spiritual Path

To cut the story short, the opinion of the blind lower self

Took prince to his grave after one year.

When king returned from spiritual absorption (Sukr) to recovery (Sahu)

His Mars like anger had already shed the blood[87].

[87] When king returned from the inner state of spiritual absorption in the ocean of Gnosis, he realized that the prince has died due to his anger. Mars due to its redness is also used as a parable for anger. The anger of a prophet and Gnostic becomes a reason for Divine retribution on their behalf. When king recovered from his inner state, his

When this unparalleled one saw his collection of arrows

He found one arrow missing.

He asked where that arrow is and asked God

He was told: The one striking him is your arrow.

The generous and bounteous king already forgave him

But arrow had already struck and had shed the blood.

He died and the king lamented his demise

He is everything; He takes life, He is also the [protecting] friend[88].

If both are not present, then He is not everything

He is the perisher of His creations and He is also the mourner for them[89].

That pale faced martyr (prince) used to thank God

That he (king) struck on the body and not on the soul[90].

The outer body in the end is bound to go away [at its destined time]

The soul will be alive and stay happy forever in the never-ending eternity.

If that anger was acted upon, it was acted upon on the skin only

Friend without any pain and suffering, returned to the Friend.

Even though the prince made the king his means for treading the spiritual path

Evil eye closed his path [to spiritual ascension to the Divine].

---

anger subsided. He returned to God and beseeched Him for the reason for subsiding of his anger. He was Divinely informed that the reason being it is that the retribution has taken place due to his anger.

[88] The prince died and king started to weep because even though he became the cause of his death, he was still his friend, his adviser, his guardian and used his inner spirituality to help bring about an inner transformation in the prince.

[89] God's perfection cannot exist if He does not have both qualities of taking lives and also being a protecting friend and helper.

[90] Prince in his afterlife, thanked God that the punishment for his mistake was meted out to his body alone, his soul and faith remained protected from any retributions. Body is only temporary which is bound to perish one day, if soul had died or harmed, it would have been an utter destruction. Anger had befallen on the body then his soul returned to the Soul of the souls.

And the third prince was slower compared to his two older brothers

He [successfully] attained both the outer form and the inner meaning [of the spiritual path].

The princess, the dominion, the reign, he took all of them

It is suitable that you remain surprised and puzzled with that[91].

I am vexed by the prolongation of the story

I am immersed in the ocean of deep spiritual meanings, but you are hasty[92].

And at that time by means of the humiliation [of the lower self], humility and scrupulous adherence [to the perfected spiritual guide],

The third prince found his objective from that Kind One who gets our works done and makes us reach our objectives[93].

Rumi's Ending of the *Mathnavi* – the Couplets of Deep Spiritual Meanings[94]

I make patience my ladder for ascension to spiritual degrees

So that I reach the loftiness of success in my striving.

The end result for every patience is success

[91] The youngest of the three princes, did not hasten [in the spiritual path trying to achieve the end goal of the path which is] meeting with the Beloved, like the oldest brother, nor did he claim perfection like the middle brother.
[92] Rumi is saying: I am vexed by the prolongation of this story. It's because every part of this story makes me move to deep inner meanings and spiritual secrets of that part, and I find myself immersed in that.
[93] With patient perseverance, spiritual strivings, forbearance in enduring humiliations, absolute humility, true sincerity, single-mindedness of purpose, focus on the final goal no matter what the situation is, and other great qualities that are needs for students and travelers of the spiritual path, caused him to attain his final objective where his other two brothers failed due to their shortcomings and mistakes in their spiritual struggles. In the end, they were also Divinely accepted for the efforts they made, albeit shortcomings since they tried their best before faltering. The youngest prince attained the wealth of Divine proximity, intimacy and acceptance. This honor is only possible through Divine largesse and generosity.
[94] Rumi abruptly ended his great masterpiece with these final verses without elaborating on the story of the third prince and how he realized the fruits of the spiritual path. He predicted that a living soul will come after him who will complete this story along with another story about three lazy brothers whose father left an inheritance in the care of a judge to decide who the laziest of all is and to hand him over the inheritance.

After every bitterness, one finds sweetness.

When something arises in my heart during His Presence

Any verses [of poetry] or anything not related to worldly matters.

I consider them sent by Him towards me

From His heart which is like a shiny star that is seen in Yemen.

I bow my head [in humility] before His Magnificence and Sacredness

I become grateful to Him from [the innermost recesses of] my heart.

This matter in my heart is from Him [alone]

Because there is a hole (way) from one heart to another.

Now that the sun of spiritual inspiration from the window of my heart has set

It (Mathnavi) has ended and God knows the best[95].

Rumi's Son the Gnostic, the Perfected Spiritual Guide Maulana Baha ul-Millat's Conclusion of the *Mathnavi* – the Couplets of Deep Spiritual Meanings, After His Discussion with His Father and Reporting What he Said[96]

When my father (Rumi), for a long time with this Mathnavi

Remained silent, I said to him: O living soul!

For what reason you are not talking?

[95] I will sit in a state of spiritual contemplation focusing on the Divine. Whatever thoughts come to my mind, if they are not worldly thoughts, I will consider that they have been Divinely sent to my heart. When the reflection of His conscious falls on my heart, I become convinced of His Magnificence and Sacredness and become grateful to Him and consider that these thoughts in the heart, have come from Him as there is a way from one heart to another [if they are connected in the state of true love]. At this point, the sun of inspiration of the subjects for this "*Mathnavi*" (Couplets of Deep Spiritual Meanings) that was coming into my heart from its window open towards the Divine Reality, has now set and these subjects have stopped coming. As a result of that, I end this book right here and God knows His wisdom behind each and everything. Rumi lays bare here the Divine inspiration as a source for this masterpiece that is the best book on the subject of treading the spiritual path and consequent attainment of Divine love, of the entire human civilization till the end of times. It is also considered to be the best elucidation of the crux of the meaning and message of Qur'an for the entire humanity for all times to come.

[96] Son of Rumi, Maulana Baha ul-Millat (real name is Baha al-Din Walad) wrote this conclusion of the "*Mathnavi*" to elaborate on why his father abruptly ended this great book while leaving the story of the third prince incomplete. Rumi told him that a living soul will come after him who will complete the story and the book.

Why have you shut the door of the knowledge that comes from God into one's heart?

The story of the princes has not ended

Pearl of the third prince remained without getting tied to the thread.

Rumi said: After that, my speaking abilities have fallen asleep like a camel

Until the Day of Judgment, there will be no conversation with anyone [on the subject of "Mathnavi" and the story of the three princes].

Its elucidation remains, but in inside [of me]

It has closed and it does not come out.

My speaking faculty at that place has fallen asleep like a camel

That faculty says: I have closed my mouth from speaking.

My time has come for departing [from this world] and for jumping in the stream [of eternal life]

Except for His being, everything is perishing and coming to an end.

The remainder of this [story] will come, without being spoken of with the tongue

In the heart of a person who possesses a living soul[97].

The matter has ended and so is my life

The glad tidings have come [to me from my Beloved] of being liberated from the body.

I will reach the immensity of the realm of souls

I will pass through this drop of moisture and will reach the fathomless ocean[98].

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[97] This is where Rumi is foretelling his son that someone will come after him who will complete the story and thus will complete the book. It will be done by someone who possesses a living soul, i.e., a soul alive with Divine Presence and Gnosis. Previously, Rumi also remarkably foretold that he was about to depart from this ephemeral earthly sojourn and expressed his eagerness to meeting with his Beloved in an eternal existence.

[98] I will now reach the realm of the souls (*'Alam al-Arwah*). Compared to this ocean, the material realm (*'Alam Nasoot*) we are in, is just a drop of moisture and in it there is little influence of the realm of the souls.

Because this world is alive and pleasant looking due to this moisture

This moisture has come from the ocean, that's why, it's good and happy.

When the soul is alive in between the soil and wetness

Contemplate, how would it be in the world of the ocean?[99]

Ocean is like a city and moisture is like a door [to that city]

Consider the moisture as a drop and the ocean is fathomless and unbounded[100].

Through this moisture that is like life, come inside

Into the ocean of the Beloved, so that you would attain subsistence [without any end][101].

Since on this side [of worldly existence], there is moisture from the ocean of life

You seek that greatness by way of your soul.

Every part of the dust particle takes one to the grave

The wave from the ocean of souls, takes one to the Beloved[102].

Seek the meeting with the Beloved with your heart and soul

Remember the name of God without the tongue and lips [by means of your heart].

So, you can get freedom from this imprisonment [of the body] and this ephemeral world

So, you can always remain in the realm of the souls.

The seeds of your life, sown in a barren land

By you so that in the end it brings about your end[103].

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[99] This soul is alive in between the soil and dust and small amount of moisture of the material realm. One can guess how immense its life would be in the realm of the souls.

[100] The material realm (this world we are in) is like a door that leads into the cities of the realm of the souls and the angelic realm (*'Alam al-Malakoot*), the former being like a drop and the latter two are like oceans.

[101] The existence and subsistence of soul, depends on it merging into the ocean of the Beloved that it came from.

[102] Human body made up of dust ends up in a grave. The soul takes one to the Beloved (God).

[103] Do not waste your life in just taking care of the body, otherwise it will bring about your destruction.

This precious, beautiful life
Why do you waste it without a [good] compensation?[104]
O hardworking person! Will you not endure loss?
When you give up a garden and take up a thorny land?
When you give your limited life
In the way of [striving for] God, it will become unlimited.
Innumerable, unbounded, and uncountable it will become
The ten-day long life that is spent in Divine servitude.
Beware! Do your trade in this bazaar
In exchange for one thorn, take away hundreds of thousands of flowers.
For the one seed you sow, you will get
Hundreds of thousands of grains by the blessings of the Bounteous One.
Counting is done only where there is an end
On the side where God is, it is countless.
O separated part! Go towards your whole [from whence you came]
Pass over the ego and run into the refuge of God.
From the actions and words of a human being
It becomes apparent how the soul is.
At what spiritual degree the soul is, what is it?
A believer, an unbeliever, or a Gnostic?
Do not keep water in the water container without the help of the sea
So that the sweet water does not become distasteful[105].

[104] The part of the life that is just spent on worldly chores without taking care of one's eternal needs has been wasted. If the limited life of the world is spent on seeking God, it leads one to an eternal everlasting life.
[105] The water of the soul needs to be connected to the sea of the Soul of souls, otherwise, still water becomes unpleasant.

A still water, without any help, becomes bad

Its good color, smell and taste goes away.

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) has said: A person whose two days are the same

Is in a loss and is in doubt.

In my foolishness, I am living without certitude

Like an empty bag filled up with air[106].

Its sorrow is increasing every moment

Every moment, it is becoming worse and weak.

That rejected one from the Divine Presence, heads towards the hell

Without the sweet water of the ocean, it proceeds towards fire and punishment.

Before your matter reaches that point [of no return]

And every breath of negligence makes you walk backwards.

Like Prophet Abraham, return to your origin

Pass over the stars and blue sky.

Put the step of courage, on Sun and Moon

Put your head on that court [in a state of submission to the Divine will].

Spend your ego on [service to] God

So that you are not separated [from Divine mercy] like Satan.

In the ocean of souls, empty out the water of your soul

So that you would become a boundless ocean without shore.

Let's make the story brief as I have gone behind the curtain [at the end of my life]

[106] One who does not have certitude in eternal verities, continually regresses in the spiritual path and due to not having any link to the ocean [of Divine Beauty], the water of one's soul becomes dirty.

Yes, be quiet and God knows the best.

Thanks God! This book has reached the end of its subject matter

Cash was not lost, and it reached the brothers.

This collection [of poetry of wisdom and Divine Gnosis in Mathnavi] is a ladder towards the heaven

Whoever climbs it to go up, will reach the roof.

Not the roof of the heaven that is green

Instead, it's the roof that is higher than the heaven[107]*.*

This roof of the heaven finds its nourishment from the Divine Presence

Its perpetual rotation is due to that desire to find its boundless love[108]*.*

The Beginning of the End of Rumi's Mathnavi – the Couplets of Deep Spiritual Meanings, As Predicted by Rumi that it will be Completed by a Living Soul and it was done by Maulana Ilahi Baksh Kandehlavi[109]

The attraction of the intensity of spirituality and desire of Maulana Husamuddin[110]

Is pulling me towards [writing] the conclusion [of Mathnavi].

To make the "Couplets of Deep Spiritual Meanings" move towards conclusion

Is pulling the soul towards the straight path.

---

[107] The Divine Presence.

[108] The conclusion of "*Mathnavi*" (Couplets of Deep Spiritual Meanings) by Rumi's son comes to an end here. As foretold by Rumi, what follows is the conclusion of this great book, that happened to be completed by an Indian Gnostic Maulana Ilahi Baksh Kandehlavi.

[109] From this point onwards, the *Mathnavi*'s conclusion is provided by Maulana Ilahi Baksh Kandehlavi who also ended the two unfinished stories of *Mathnavi* that Rumi left incomplete, including the conclusion of the story of the three princes.

[110] Maulana Zia-ul Haq Husamuddin was the disciple of Rumi who also became a perfected spiritual guide in the very lifetime of Rumi. He was the one who persuaded Rumi to write *Mathnavi* in the first place and he used to provide papers, pens and ink to Rumi to continue writing and he was the one who compiled this great masterpiece and spread it as far and wide as he could. Rumi has started each of the six volumes of *Mathnavi* by praising the spirituality of Maulana Husamuddin and attributing his inspiration to write *Mathnavi* to him. Maulana Ilahi Baksh Kandehlavi is also citing the pull of the soul of Maulana Husamuddin as the driving force behind his writing of the conclusion of *Mathnavi*.

The verses [of poetry] are imperceptibly dropping from the lips [without any conscious effort from me]

O Husamuddin! Do whatever you want.

Since the reins of my intellect are in your hands

Pull it wherever you want, my soul is intoxicated with you.

When sun's reflection fell on some water

Water thanked the sun for this tremendous gift.

The soul of Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi

Who is an ocean of knowledge and a moon of Gnosis.

When he put his reflection on the Mount Sinai of my heart

My body made of dust and water became illuminated.

That moon of lofty heaven at every moment

Signals to the door of my heart that now.

Start the end of the Mathnavi

Open my sealed envelope.

Say that story which remained [incomplete] without saying

String that pearl that remained without getting strung to the thread.

Quickly string it to the thread

Our spiritual connection will surely reach you.

Since I did not see my own spiritual degree, I remained silent

I put my head on his door.

Since breaking the command of the king is more difficult than breaking the pearl

I embarked upon carrying out his command unhesitatingly.

…

Narration of the State of the Third Prince Who after the Death of His Second Brother, Attained the Proximity, Closeness and Gnosis of the King

Let's leave the other thing behind because the third prince

When heard about the death of his second brother.

Came to the royal court of the king

In a state of pain for the Beloved, as a seeker with intense desire.

As a protocol, the introducer said [to the king]:

This third brother is more deserving of your mercy.

Both of his arms have weakened in your love

A bandage is needed on his defeat.

The king had mercy on him and asked him to come forth

With royal kindness asked him to sit next to him on the throne.

Although he knew the [inner] state of the prince through spiritual inspiration

In a strange manner, kept asking him for his state.

With his kindness, consoled him so much

That he removed that pain and sorrow from his soul.

He buried his dead brother

Associated his soul with the living one.

After a few days, the royal company was in full swing

The heart of the king softened on him.

He handed over all big and small treasuries to him

Opened up the royal hospitality for him.

From the largesse of the sea of generosity of the soul imparting king

The bud of his heart started to bloom.

A lot of [spiritual] secrets were deposited in his heart

He became an embodiment of illumination like his second brother.

At the stages of Divine proximity and Gnosis

His degree increased more than his second brother.

He used to strive spiritually and tread the spiritual path

He used to make [sincere] efforts and his inner illumination was ever increasing.

But he himself learned a lesson

He accepted an advice from both of his older brothers.

He had become well familiar with the gorges of the spiritual path

He used to exercise great care and caution and was very pleasant.

He saw that the first brother gave up his life due to hastiness [in the spiritual path]

And the second one was sent to his grave because of self-conceitedness, self-centeredness, and egoism.

A human being should, in the path of the Beloved

Make efforts in a gradual, patient and forbearing way.

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) has said:

O youth! Soft, slow, gradual, and patient approach (Rifq) is the root of wisdom.

Ibn Masud has narrated from Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him):

O pious man! Patience is half the faith.

Otherwise, the beauty of the Beloved is total illumination

The eye of the heart is shattered in His Beauty.

You are not capable of enduring a sudden Divine vision

Polish the mirror [of your heart] gradually [to remove all the dust of ignorance, heedlessness and evil and make it shine with the beauty of your inner character and being].

This gradual approach is for increasing one's spiritual capacity

When has His unveiled Beauty closed its door?

The Beloved is like a sun in the middle of the heaven

But O bat! Where is your eye [to see the sun]?

Go, first give birth to your eye

Then open it towards the Beloved.

Otherwise, you will not be able to tolerate its brilliant illumination and shine

Its sun will set your star.

You will either die or become mad, completely losing your mind

This is why many have become Majdhub (those who have lost their minds by witnessing the Divine Beauty without first developing their spiritual capacity to endure it).

A straw cannot bear the weight of a mountain

For this sorrow and sadness, you need someone who has attained spiritual perfection.

His first brother hastened

He attained unveiled meeting with the Beloved in a state of trepidation and convulsion.

Since pure meeting with the Beloved was not suitable for him

He started to convulse, became broken and died.

Until this veil of the body is not removed

When can one get the unveiled meeting with the Beloved?

But when the lion of the intense love runs all of a sudden

The lover becomes its victim like raw meat.

The perturbation of the intense love causes one to hasten

Like a shell at the bottom of sea, one opens the mouth for the [rain] drop.

But to open the mouth before rain
Achieves nothing other than pain and hardships.
A woman who is not menstruating and has not attained puberty
Is incapable of surrounding the sperm [for procreation].

Narration of the State of the Third Prince and Him Attaining the Outer and Inner Perfections and Him Exercising Patience in Expressing His Need and Reaching His Objective

And that third price by means of hundred precautions and patience
Used to derive like rain clouds from the sea of Gnosis.
By means of the spiritual company of the king every night
Every morning illuminations of God's oneness used to run in his heart.
Attainment of spiritual capacity and exuberance of wisdom
Appeared for him every moment due to the company of the king.
At all times in his heart from the direction of the moon like king
New illuminations descended on his heart morning and evening.
He did not even breathe for anything other than his objective
He retained a spark in the heart of the benevolent king.
Such a king who is replete with kindness and generosity
Why should I even bring the word of my need in front of him?
His beneficence even without asking, gives out innumerable blessings
How would my heart dare to leap for asking?
Our king is like a clear polished mirror heart
In king's heart, there is [also] a place of danger for me.
If I am truly deserving of that precious pearl
Through his own beneficence, the King will grant it to me.

His beneficence grants to every person of spiritual capacity

Verily in accordance with one's inner spiritual state.

Anyone who has capacity and eligibility

A royal bestowal comes to one from the king without even asking.

The king to whom even a needle's head is not hidden

Why should I run on different paths for seeking my objective?

Why should I present my useless thing to him?

Why should I reveal my need to him?

Our king is bright conscious and aware

In the end, he grants the desires of the heart.

O heart! Be patient because it is the key to happiness

There are a lot of comforts and happiness in it.

One day the king said: O soul of kindness!

You are a sea of patience and forbearance and a mine of benevolence.

I am vexed by my [responsibilities of the] dominion and empire

My heart is really connected to the lofty throne of Divine oneness (unity).

Become my successor and do the work [of the empire]

So that I can get rid of what's bothering my heart.

I would like to head into solitude

I would want to become silent from conversation.

My heart will become devoid of worries

It will become a manifestation of Divine illuminations.

A moment of contemplation is worth a year of worship

This contemplation is wonderment in the Divine Beauty.

When the prince heard this matter

Out of etiquette of respect to the king, put his head on his feet.

God forbid! There may not come a time when you relinquish the reign

Or adopt solitude in a secluded room.

May your shade on my head

Remain covering until the Day of Judgment.

O God! Let not my life be so much

That I see the end of king's reign.

There were a lot of discussions along those lines

But the king was searching [for truth] by testing the prince.

To see if there is any desire for fame and power in his heart

Or the magnificence of empire and dominion like the king.

Is there any arrogance and pride in the heart?

Or his inner being is intoxicated with the wine of yearning for the Divine?

The king saw that the prince did not cook any ideas in his head

In his tree of being, nothing ripened other than the fruits of obedience and sincerity.

Whether it was love for status and dominion, greed, and desire

In his head, nothing has found a way other than the yearning for the Beloved.

Other than the love for God and His special slaves

There is no way into his heart for anything else.

The king found his inner states in accordance with the requirements of the spiritual path

He found every step of his on the highway of the Divine law.

There is no inclination in his heart towards the dominion

He is a seeker of the ocean [of Divine Gnosis] and is not beholden to the ship [of worldly means and ends].

He tested him a lot on various scales of examination

Nothing was there except for pure gold.

The king said to his companions and helpers that this youth

Is not deserving of anything other than the soul like girl.

The pairing of moon with the sun is better

The association of the body with the soul is better.

Him and her are both deserving of and compatible to each other

Each one of them are superior [in inner excellences] to their companions.

Such a woman is suitable for such a man

Such a jewel is suitable for that ring.

All the people [of the king] praised such opinion

They all said: Please hurry, it's a perfect opportunity.

The king commanded and they arranged a beautiful gathering

An excellent wedding gathering was setup.

One heart and soul of both eternally desirous of each other

The vows of acceptance of making their relations permissible happened.

Their blessed union happened

The soul to soul and heart to heart got connected.

With gradual perseverance, the affairs of both the worlds remain in order

Because haste is born out of Satan.

God has declared patience as the source of determination for all matters

No doubt the patient one achieves one's desires.

Whoever endured hardship, also obtained the treasure

One who became lazy, also died in misery.

But about the lazy, the lazy for the world is better

Haste in worldly matters is bad.

Have patience, hand over the world to Him

He knows what's good and bad for you better than you.

The lazy for the world is active in the Divine path

Like the prince who is the third.

Details of the Interpretation and Meanings of the Story of the Three Princes and Construing it and Linking it with the Degrees of Gnosis (*Irfan* / *Ma'rifa*) – the State of Proximity, Intimacy and Knowledge of the Divine that Leads to the Attainment of the Real Purpose of Life and Consequent Eternal Happiness and Endless Triumph

Derive full lesson from this story

So that you can get full measure out of this story.

Human beings should do the work they are supposed to do

They should not depend on stories.

You have consumed and wasted your whole life in stories

Morning is near, wake up from your sleep.

The morning of old age has arrived, and it is time to depart

Don't indulge in stories [that don't get you anywhere or anything].

Do the work that will serve as a provision for the path [on your journey to eternity]

Do that which will be bright like a moon for you in [the darkness and loneliness of] your grave.

It's evening and the sun has set

It's late now, go back to your home quickly.

For a long time, you have eaten breads and sweets

Have you seen any treasury in your inner being from that?

You raised up your lower self and it became a bull

When have you taken steps towards your final destination?

So now prepare for your inevitable departure

From material realm, go towards the inner reality.

Eat what will increase the light in your heart

That will open up your window towards the other world.

Your precious life has ended in laziness

A few days have remained, but you are [still] heedless.

Whatever happened has happened, you can still come to the Friend

Pick up your steps faster in the alley of the Friend.

Whatever has remained, do not let it go to waste

Even if you have to walk on your head, put your head on the feet of the Beloved.

O you! Even if you disobey Him for hundred years

The door is still open if you knock on it.

What is soul? It's a bird with sacred noble qualities

It is closed in a cage [of the body] for the sake of attaining Gnosis (proximity with the Divine).

What is soul? It's a bird of sacred [Divine] lineage

It is inside a prison for the sake of earning.

Parrot is in a cage for the sake of being taught

So, it can learn to whistle in a sweet voice.

Soul has come from nothingness for the sake of trade

Its direction at all times is towards eternity.

Your lower self, in the matter of training, is like the father [of the three princes]

It prevents you from going into that mind-blowing castle.

The lower self that is inclined towards evil, makes you walk towards sins

It calls you towards evil, disbelief [in the Divine path towards the Divine Reality] and rebellion.

It prevents you from entering the castle replete with pictures

Because it obliterates the worldly intellect.

The castle imbued with sacredness of the path of Prophet Muhammad

It is mind-blowing for the materialistic mindset due to the lessons learned in life.

In this castle are the pictures of the king and his daughter

Heavenly companions, heaven and beautiful love is mentioned there.

Since "We have given in marriage big eyed heavenly companions" has been Divinely proclaimed

The pearl of the heart has been tied with the string of greed.

Since human beings have been created in eternity

[They are inclined] Towards earning profits and repelling all harms [by their very nature].

That's why, in the castle of the Divine law

Pictures have been made to make humans both desire and dread.

Sometimes people are made to tread the [Divine] path by way of greed [for various rewards like heaven, heavenly blessings and companions, dominion, etc.]

Sometimes they are made to fear the abyss of hell.

The rebellious lower selves, by means of dread

Are forcibly taken to the King.

So that this lower self (Nafs) that is inclined to evil doing, either happily or forcibly

Becomes accustomed to the King and his daughter.

But like the three princes, in other words, the human beings

O one with the eye to see! Are of three types in terms of the spiritual path [they take].

One is someone who oppresses one's own soul, another one is in the middle [of the two ends of the spectrum]

Third one is someone who has been made to strive to be the foremost in righteousness and good deeds.

First prince destroyed his own life

He belonged to the group that oppress their own souls.

The pearl of his life dropped out of hand due to the heat [of intense love]

He gave no importance to the right way of spiritual striving and Gnosis.

But the benevolence of the king helped him and

[In the end] He became one of the Divinely accepted ones [after his life ended] and that is surprising.

One who gives life for Him, He gives such a one life from Him

One who gives one emerald, is given the entire mine [full of emeralds].

He got burned like moths with a flame

He had fallen in a well like a deranged.

In the battle of love, brave ones are needed

So that one is fulfilled with love according to one's capacity.

If Friend could be found through dying

The path of God would have been very easy.

In [Divine] love, at every moment, there is different type of death

With whose bitterness, the death feels hundred dangers.

The second prince did the spiritual striving and effort

But got involved in arrogance and inner turmoil.

He made himself a co-sharer of the sun (the perfected spiritual guide)

Started to claim, "I am the Truth".

He then hit the roadblock

The destination of death came in front of him.

He stopped on the path due to the perfection of this path [that does not allow one to forge ahead with inner vices]

He still drank a draught from the beauty of the path.

King's benevolence, caused his soul to be Divinely accepted [as he still strived on the path until making mistakes]

He still met the Beloved [after his worldly life ended].

It was not due to his capacity or any right

It was all the kindness and beneficence of the King who is the Creator of all.

And the third price was of the foremost of the foremost [in his spiritual striving]

He exceeded his two older brothers.

He became aware of the path to Gnosis

He became a companion of the reality of the King.

He did the spiritual strivings and efforts, the Divine knowledge came to him

Every moment, the Divine proximity was increasing.

Since the people of faith, tread the path when given incentives

They run towards the King because of their love for his daughter.

But when their sights fell on the King Himself, they realize their folly

They then made subservient their love for the concealed daughter, to their love for the King.

Since the King saw complete [spiritual] capability in him [in terms of reaching the perfections of the path]

Gave the daughter in marriage with that knowledge.

Even though the other two princes got accepted by the Divine largesse

But where was that [spiritual] degree before Him and the level of Divine proximity that the youngest prince received?

The imperfect ones were also honored by the king when he had them seated on his throne besides him

He called them his own and showered them with wealth.

The older prince himself is ashamed of his shortcomings

He is sad and ashamed while seated on the throne.

There are thorns in his heart due to his own slips and mistakes

He is enduring pain due to his own shortcomings.

That's why, the best of all creations (Prophet Muhammad) said:

There is no sorrow in Heaven, except for the negligence [from Divine remembrance and in treading the Divine path].

If sinners are provided with a way into Heaven

If they are granted royal castle and robes.

They look at their ugly feet and like a peacock

Are ashamed with their heads down [in remorse].

What is the benefit of a glass palace for an ugly person?

For such a one, there is a jealous mirror everywhere [to show one the reality of one's ugliness].

O Uncle! There is no end to [the immensity of] this matter

Tell us the story of the king who joined [the three princes].

The Tradition of the King who Left His Kingdom Behind to Join the Three Princes Undertaking their Journey

O Zia-ul Haq Husamuddin Hasan!

Narrate to me the state of [the fourth person in the story,] the king.

When he became someone, who abdicated his kingdom

He remained with the princes in the state of poverty.

He left his kingdom behind and became their companion [in their momentous struggles]

He was treading the path along with them in their company.

He was active in serving them in unison

With a pure heart cleansed of all hypocrisy.

The reflection of their [Divine] love [on his soul] had captivated him

In their journey, he showed unison with the three [princes].

Intense love has a lot of effects like that

They are chains for a heart that has freedom.

The company of a lover, makes you a lover

The company of a sinner makes you a sinner.

Every person attains morals and character from another

A cantaloupe attains its [sweet] aroma from another cantaloupe.

A denier of the influence of [another person's] company is a fool

One who runs away from a [good] company is negligent.

A cantaloupe catches its color from another cantaloupe

Why would the company of another human being will not create an effect?

That dog became a companion of the people of the cave

Until the dog characteristics completely departed it.

Become the dust of the feet of the Godly people

So that you receive illumination from their moon [like illuminated inner qualities].

That's why, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) has said:

Do not adopt company of anyone other than a believer (a person of character and Godliness).

Fragrance makes container fragrant

Manure imparts stench to the land.

When oil spent itself on flowers

It became a container of flower's aroma.

That king was with the princes

When two of the three brothers gave away their lives.

He became a companion of the third

He was present in front of him at all times like a true devotee.

When the third became the son-in-law of the King of China

He was among his special elites.

When the King of China saw his tremendous love and devotion

And his special association with his beloved.

He found both of them one soul and two bodies

The king [of China] got inclined towards him in friendship.

He said to the prince out of kindness:

This companion of yours is a pride of every servant.

He has no inclination and heart desire other than to serve [you]

He is so engrossed in your thought that he has become devoid of everything else in the world.

It is necessary to reward such a person like him

One who depletes the desires of his own lower self.

One who has lost his own desire in your desire

Such a person should be rewarded profusely.

The prince kissed his feet and said:

What is hidden from us is clearly evident to you.

When in the hope of finding your company

I left my homeland to embark upon my journey.

This man who was a very successful king of his country

Showed activeness in adopting our company.

He left his country and riches for our sake

In unison and unflinching support for us, he raised the flag in his heart.

Because of us, he endured many vicissitudes

He left his country and became our friend.

The benevolence of your majesty has a demand

It's a place for generosity and mercy.

The king said he will grant him another country

He will be bestowed upon in a way that is suitable for his status.

The king granted him more castles and countries than what was previously estimated

For the sake of the third prince, was brought out for him.

What his eyes did not even see was bestowed upon him

What his ears did not even hear was placed before him.

That fourth (person) also reached his objective

Like a client with the lawyer, like a guest with the host

That noble wealthy [with the spiritual wealth, i.e., Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him)] said: It is such a nation that even their companion does not remain deprived[111].

Keeping the hearts and serving others

Makes you one who is served and grants you success.

Especially serving the people of God [who truly devote themselves to Him]

Grants you excellent Divine acceptance [and brings you] near God.

A person who earns nearness of people who have received God's nearness

On such a one, God's kindness is spent upon through the hands of the intimates of God.

A person who earns nearness of people who have received God's nearness

Becomes deserving of God's benevolence and largesse.

A person who showed kindness to friends and intimates of God

Became diligent in their service.

Became deserving of Divine favors

Such a one became a receiver of Divine support and succor.

Ibn Mas'ud (May God be pleased with him) narrated from Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him):

O Pious person! One will be with those one loves.

One who loved a nation is [counted] from that nation

The love of the friends and intimates of God becomes a light of the soul.

Make it a part of your being to love and dislike only for the sake of God

So that you receive acceptance at the door of the Beloved.

[111] A prophetic narration of Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) said: The friends and intimates of God or Gnostics are such people that whoever adopts their company does not remain deprived [of the benefits of the spiritual path].

When their companion king, did not have the spiritual struggle

The love of the purified ones put a lamp on his path.

One who did not have spiritual strivings, capacity, and efforts

Keeping company with the people of the spiritual path came to his help and that's all.

Make an effort so that you yourself earn acceptance of God

Or get associated with those accepted by God.

Become either a striver on the [spiritual] path or revolve around the strivers of the path

Small and big treasures will [both] come to you from that unique human being.

O soul! If you are not among one of those two

You will rise up on the Day of Judgment humiliated.

That's why, God has said in Qur'an:

In [the matter of] guidance, [you yourself should] seek a means to it.

Who has eaten the fruit preserve without a trainer [who taught how to make it in the first place]?

Tell me, how the bird would fly without the wings?

Jungle [of human life] is full of blood, entrapments and [ferocious] wild beasts

In all directions, the path of error [and misguidance] is open.

Jungle is full of snakes and there is greenery everywhere

Do not step on it without the help of the one who recites the magical words of protection, otherwise you will become vexed and will fail [to step in it].

This world is the lush green land and the lower base self (Nafs) is the snake

Think of the path of God as the jungle beset with dangers.

If snake bites you, you will become broken and regretful

You are satisfied without the reciter of the magic words, you are a fool.

If the feet of your heart are struck and penetrated by a thorn

Without the tip of a needle, how will you take it out?

Worry about the tip of the needle, memorize the magic words

Find a [perfected spiritual] guide so you can tread the arduous path [without any difficulty and falling into any errors].

Jungle is replete with thorns and there are paths in all directions

Look, there are ditches at every step.

Jungle is terrifying and robbers are hiding [in ambush] therein

Find a [perfected spiritual] guide and follow such a one.

The [spiritual] path is very arduous and there is that swift-footed paranormal being (Satan) everywhere

Who is playing hundreds of harps and tambourines on the way [to distract and dissuade you away from the Divine path].

The path is arduous and there is a dark night ahead of you

If you do not hold anyone's hand, you will be gone.

O beloved! There is no end to the immensity of this matter

"Mathnavi" should now be brought to an end.

O child! There is no end to the works of God

"Mathnavi" should be brought to an end.

The completion of the "Couplets of Deep Spiritual Meanings"

Has now happened by the spiritual endowments received from Maulavi (Rumi) and is attributed to him – the Gnostic par excellence.

Concluding Verses

One who searches for the truth gets immersed in the truth and becomes an embodiment of it

Such a one is [an embodiment of] Divine benevolence and is the Divine breeze.

Do not do evil Satanic deeds, do not become a Satan [yourself]

Pour water [of wisdom and Divine Gnosis] on the dust of someone's soul [to make it cleansed and purified].

Do not waste your [priceless] time in anything other than the truth [and the spiritual path that leads you to it]

Do not fill up your stomach and let your soul starve.

The image of other than Him [in your heart] is your veil from the truth

In all there is, there is no one other than Him [with real existence].

Become the one who is annihilated in the Being of God [by ridding yourself of the qualities of the lower self], you will then attain subsistence from God – a life that is eternal and not subject to an end

The Lord of the morning will appear within your soul.

In six volumes, the "Mathnavi" has one voice

Its essence is to dive into the ocean of annihilation in the Being of God (Fana).

If you are looking for the path of God [leading to God Himself], become alerted

Remove from within yourself the negligence and uncaringness, be awake.

First persevere in the Divine law [to conduct your outward life in conjunction with Divine injunctions with acts of worship and good dealings with fellow human beings]

Then tread the spiritual path through strivings and efforts to reform and cleanse the soul.

In the first step, set your feet firm on the Divine law

After that, tread the path of spiritual struggles.

With adorning the soul by way of "Tariqa" (the path of spiritual strivings to attain beautiful inner qualities, cleansing of the soul from all of its low and vile qualities, imperfections, blemishes, negative and evil propensities) is imperative

So that you can successfully cross the ocean of Divine Gnosis, proximity, intimacy, and knowledge (Ma'rifa).

There will never be an end to this matter [owing to its immensity, importance, and relevance to all humanity in giving them real peace, eternal bliss, and everlasting success]

So, I should make the speech brief [and end the "Mathnavi" here]. May the Divinely bestowed peace be upon you![112]

[112] At this point, Rumi's great masterpiece "*Mathnavi*" or the "Couplets of Deep Spiritual Meanings" has ended after the addition of the conclusion by Maulana Ilahi Baksh Kandehlavi.

Conclusion

The core of the human existence is the locus and origin of all negativity and positivity, happiness and sorrow, misery and ease, success and failure, constriction and expansiveness, and darkness and illumination in our lives. This core is referred to as the "heart" or "soul" of the human being that needs transformation by means of an intense inner spiritual struggle so that it emanates resilience, positivity, optimism, inner peace, tranquility, happiness, eternal bliss and endless triumph. This treatise, based on the timeless wisdom of one of the finest exponents of the entire human civilization, systematically deconstructs all impediments within the core of human existence, towards the attainment of resilience, positivity, optimism, inner peace, tranquility, and happiness and propels one towards reaching the pinnacle of human achievement in the form of eternal bliss and endless triumph in this age of anxiety, turbulence, and turmoil.

Events unfolding in the world around seem distressing. However, we can affect our own response to various situations we find ourselves in, whether personal or collective. Each one of us can choose to deal with them positively by drawing deeper into the reservoirs of one's own inner spiritual resources deep within the innermost recesses and core of the being, and using them and one's own unique situations and challenges, to positively transform oneself. This spiritual transformation will ensure the total eviction of all negativities and imbuement of all positives in their various forms, bringing the best out of individuals, who are then able to effectively deal with their life challenges. This inner transformation unleashes our true potential that in turn, brings about a positive transformation around us. Helping ourselves in this way first, helps others in the end and when the inner light and illumination of individuals intensifies, it becomes an unstoppable force for goodness in the turbulent world around. However, a journey of a thousand miles needs to begin somewhere and that is the one step you need to take to embark upon your own self-realization, attainment of the real purpose of your life, and resulting eternal happiness and everlasting triumph. This book will guide every seeker of truth in the path of self-realization. The one step needed from you is your desire for the positive transformation and for that purpose, you will need to bring an open heart and mind to explore the previously uncharted waters. Anyone choosing to do that, will be pleased with the outcome.

May you be Divinely protected and guided, in navigating through the stormy waters of this fathomless ocean of eternal verities, in your journey towards true self-realization, attainment of the real purpose of life, and consequent eternal happiness and everlasting success of the eternal life, immortalizing the human being.

Books Recommended for Further Study

This treatise has concisely dealt with the real purpose of life and the path of attaining it, that in turn leads to resilience, positivity, optimism, inner peace, tranquility, happiness, eternal bliss, and endless success irrespective of our state of anxiety, turbulence, or turmoil. The immensity and intensity of the subject matter is such that volumes have been written by great knowers of eternal verities or Gnostics throughout the previous centuries, to expound on it and illumine the path for humanity. This treatise has attempted to provide a glimpse of its immensity in the light of the spirituality and illuminated writings of one of the greatest exponents of this knowledge that humanity has ever produced – Muhammad Al-Ghazali (May God bestow His immense blessings upon him). It is of paramount importance to list some of the greatest works on this subject of profound relevance and benefit to all, that all seekers of truth can benefit from. At this point, it is fair to ask, "From where can one obtain the relevant knowledge of the purpose of life and ways of attaining eternal happiness and endless success so that the path becomes clear, illumined and widened for the one who wants to tread it and upon acting on this knowledge, one can actually reach the purpose of one's life and thus be immersed in the state of eternal bliss and endless success?" Fortunately, this great knowledge, although scarcely known nowadays, is available to anyone who wants to benefit from it. It can be obtained from the following recommended marvelous works that illumine the path for all sincere seekers of truth:

1. Through an in-depth study of Qur'an, with aid of a good exegesis, in the light of ten objectives of Qur'an as expounded by Ghazali in his book "*Jawahir al-Qur'an*" or "Jewels of the Qur'an". Studying these ten objectives, understanding, and internalizing them, and studying Qur'an with these ten objectives in mind, will open up new vistas of understanding and inner spiritual illumination.
2. Ghazali's book "*Minhaj al-Abideen ila Jannatu Rab al-'Aalameen*" or "Best Path for the Worshippers of God Leading them to Paradise of the Lord of all the Universes and Existences" or short title "Best Path for Worshippers". This book briefly explains the purpose of life and the path to acquire eternal happiness and endless success.
3. The remarkable introduction of Ghazali's book "*Kimiya-e-Sa'adat*" (or "*Kimiya as-Sa'ada*") that he wrote in Persian or "Alchemy of Eternal Happiness and Endless Success", that explains eternal happiness, immortality and true success of a human being. Remaining part of this book can also be read to learn the forty steps in brief, needed to advance on this

path. The remarkable introduction of this book is featured prominently in the first part of this treatise.

4. The four-volume compendium of wisdom by Ghazali named "*Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen*" or "Revival of Knowledge of Path to God" also known as "Revival of Religious Sciences". This immense book, divided in forty short books – each representing a step in the spiritual path to Divine Gnosis or "*Ma'rifa*", presents a detailed exposition of the purpose of human life and path of attaining eternal bliss. The third and fourth volumes of this marvelous book have been heavily used in this treatise in its second and third parts.
5. Last but not least, the best-selling poet of both the east and the west, Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi, popularly known as "Rumi", wrote the greatest poetry of the entire human history on Divine Gnosis and Divine love, called "*Mathnavi-e-Ma'navi*" or "Couplets of Deep Spiritual Meanings". It is recommended to study it with a good translation and scholarly explanation for maximum benefit. This magnificent book brings out the deep inner wisdom of Qur'an. With its help, one can achieve the purpose of one's life and consequent eternal happiness and endless success. The ending of this marvelous book has adorned the last part of this treatise.

The list of recommended books can be enormous, as the timeless treasures of wisdom, left behind by masters of eternal happiness – the Gnostics or knowers of eternal truths and Divine wisdom – is enormous. However, the journey of a thousand miles needs to begin somewhere and this short list, will both be the starting point and culmination of this great journey for the quest of eternal happiness and endless success. Following books will help one navigate through the stormy waters of this fathomless immense ocean of eternal verities, in one's journey towards inner illumination, self-realization and attainment of the real purpose of life and consequent eternal happiness and everlasting triumph:

Tafsir Al-Tustari (Great Commentaries of the Holy Qur'an) by Sahl ibn 'Abd Allah al-Tustari (Author), Yousef Meri (Editor), Annabel Keeler (Translator), Ali Keeler (Translator)
Publisher: Fons Vitae (April 13, 2011)
ISBN-10: 1891785192; ISBN-13: 978-1891785191
This exegesis of Qur'an of selected verses goes into the deeper meanings of the Divine revelation and brings out the gems embedded deep within.

The Message of the Qur'an: The full account of the revealed Arabic text accompanied by parallel transliteration by Muhammad Asad (Editor, Translator)
Publisher: The Book Foundation; Revised edition (December 1, 2008)
ISBN-10: 1904510353; ISBN-13: 978-1904510352
This is a complete exegesis or explanation of Qur'an.

The Path of the Worshipful Servants to the Garden of the Lord of All the Worlds (Minhaj Al-'abidin) by Imam Ghazali
Publisher: Al-Baz Publishing USA (2011)
ISBN-10: 1882216261; ISBN-13: 978-1882216260
Imam Ghazali's last book outlining a seven-step path for spiritual perfection and illumination.

Al-Ghazzali Alchemy of Happiness 2 Vol. set by Imam Muhammad Al-Ghazzali (Author), Jay R. Crook (Translator), Laileh Bakhtiar (Introduction)
Publisher: Kazi Publications, Inc. (January 1, 2007)
ISBN-10: 1567446744; ISBN-13: 978-1567446746
Imam Ghazali's masterpiece "*Kimiya-e-Sa'adat*" outlining the transformative agent of eternal happiness and endless success.

Revival of Religion's Sciences (Ihya al-Uloom ad-Deen) 4 Volume set by Imam Muhammad Al-Ghazali (Author), Muhammad Mahdi Al-Sharif (Translator)
Publisher: Dar Al-Kotob Al-Ilmiyah, Beirut, Lebanon (2011)
SKU 1010021; ISBN: 9782745159458
http://jamalon.com/en/1010021.html
Imam Ghazali's 4-volume compendium of wisdom dissecting every aspect of spiritual path leading to attainment of one's purpose of life and consequent eternal happiness and endless success.

Masnavi (6 volumes) by Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi. R.A. Nicholson (Translator)
http://www.dar-al-masnavi.org/about_nicholson.html
"*Mathnavi-e-Ma'navi*" or "Couplets of Deep Spiritual Meanings" by the best-selling poet in the US popularly known as Rumi, is a magnificent six-volumes book that brings out the deep inner wisdom of Qur'an, deeper meaning and purpose of one's life, and consequent eternal happiness and endless success. This is the best spiritual poetry ever written on Gnosis and Divine love by the spiritual master who is a guiding light for the entire humanity for all times to come, immersed, submerged, and drowned in the fathomless ocean of Divine love.

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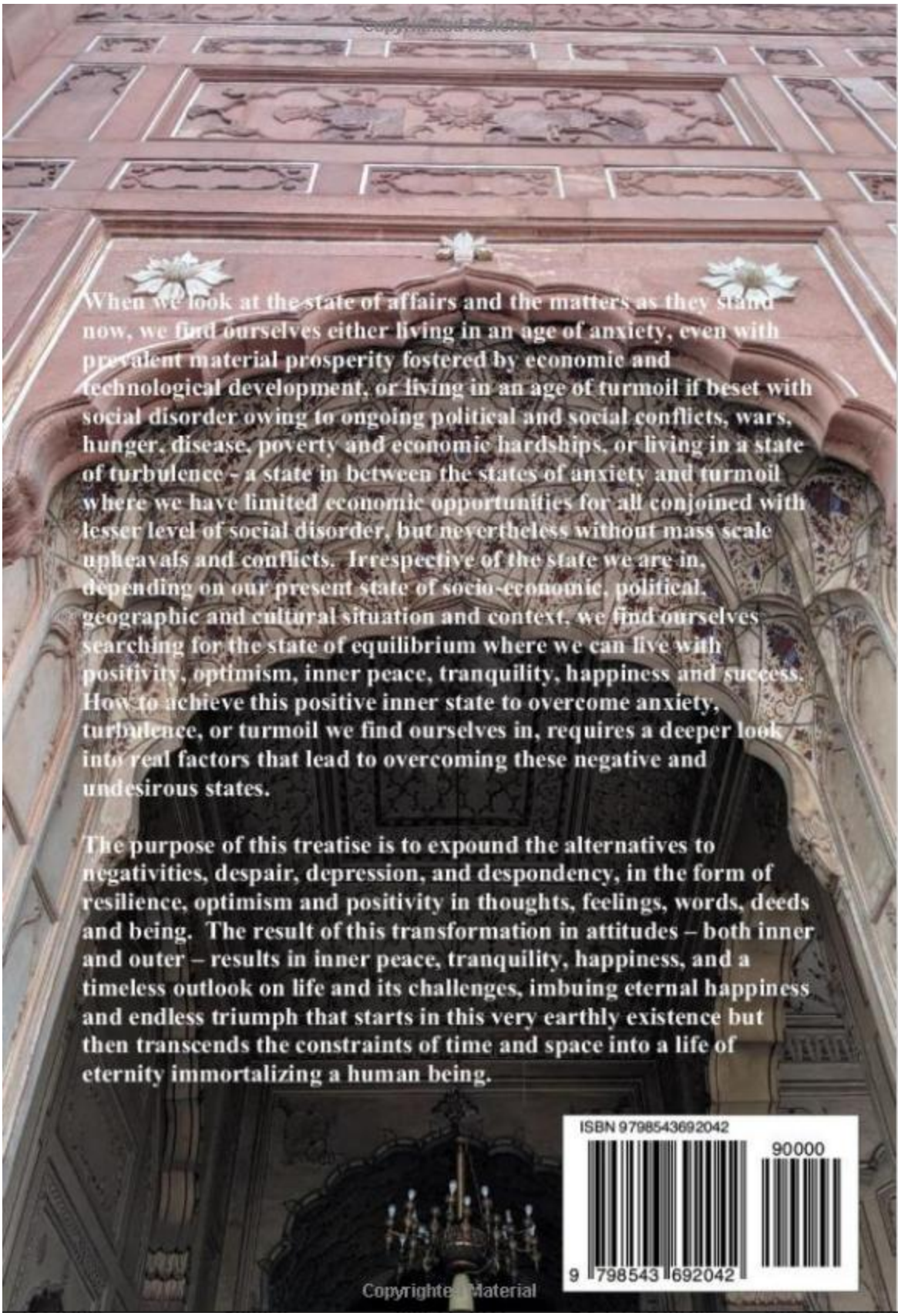
When we look at the state of affairs and the matters as they stand now, we find ourselves either living in an age of anxiety, even with prevalent material prosperity fostered by economic and technological development, or living in an age of turmoil if beset with social disorder owing to ongoing political and social conflicts, wars, hunger, disease, poverty and economic hardships, or living in a state of turbulence - a state in between the states of anxiety and turmoil where we have limited economic opportunities for all conjoined with lesser level of social disorder, but nevertheless without mass scale upheavals and conflicts. Irrespective of the state we are in, depending on our present state of socio-economic, political, geographic and cultural situation and context, we find ourselves searching for the state of equilibrium where we can live with positivity, optimism, inner peace, tranquility, happiness and success. How to achieve this positive inner state to overcome anxiety, turbulence, or turmoil we find ourselves in, requires a deeper look into real factors that lead to overcoming these negative and undesirous states.
The purpose of this treatise is to expound the alternatives to negativities, despair, depression, and despondency, in the form of resilience, optimism and positivity in thoughts, feelings, words, deeds and being. The result of this transformation in attitudes – both inner and outer – results in inner peace, tranquility, happiness, and a timeless outlook on life and its challenges, imbuing eternal happiness and endless triumph that starts in this very earthly existence but then transcends the constraints of time and space into a life of eternity immortalizing a human being.
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